

Fifth Estate

Summer 2015

VIETNAM: U.S. Defeat

HISTORY & FORGETTING

David Watson

NO ONE SPAT ON GIs

Jerry Lembcke

ORIGINS OF MAKE LOVE; NOT WAR

Penelope Rosemont

THE POOL AT THE SAK WOI CLUB

Nhi (Nancy) Chung



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Technological Biteback



John Zerzan: *Paradigms
Debate: Transhumanism vs. Primitivism*
Jason Rodgers: *Computerized Television*
Ian Erik Smith: *Allende's Computers*

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LETTERS

Our readers respond

Send letters to fe@fifthestate.org or Fifth Estate, POB 201016, Ferndale MI 48220
All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten; letters may be edited for length

Pieing God 1

I had just thought about Pat Halley yesterday. (See "FE Staffer Puts a Pie in God's Face," FE Spring 2015)

I find myself thinking about people in my life that I've lost. Being part of the Detroit tribe was a meaningful time in my life. My brother and I were part of the conspiracy to pie the Maharaji that Pat carried out in 1973. I was only 20 years old at the time.

I remember meeting an owner of a chain of nursing homes that was upset at Pat for writing articles about poor conditions for the elderly. Pat was the first champion for the frail elderly I ever encountered. He shaped my attitude about them and gave me an awareness about the tyranny of society towards the poor. To this day, I endeavor to empower both the young and the old.

Ever since we went from living as tribes to Civilization, we have sanitized death, illness, and aging. Our food is killed and processed in factories. Our sick, elderly, and dying are squirreled away in hospitals and nursing homes. People don't talk about it. I learned to speak out. To take action. To live a meaningful life.

Thank you for remembering Pat. For me, remembering him is the sweetest pain.

Al Schafer
San Diego

Pieing God 2

A friend of mine gave me your Spring 2015 issue, which I loved. You guys rock.

I was interested, though, in the piece about your late homie, Pat Halley, having hit the Indian kid in the face with a pie 40 years ago.

I guess the optics of it, given the racial and historical context, were just something I didn't vibe on.

This kid was a Hindu, like a billion other people in his country. His people



and land were colonized by Whites for however long. He comes over here, where there's some marginal number of Whites who are receptive to whatever his get down was, and in the process, this harmless, symbolic gesture of a "key to Detroit" is offered to him, and some White guy pulls up and disrespects him in front of his people and everyone else.

You describe the fact of the Indian kid's supporters retaliating against your friend for this as "authority bearing down" him, but that seems like a strained construction of a pretty generic human instance of action and reaction.

At that moment, there were still numerous outposts of White colonial authority throughout the Global South, and the fact that your late homie was intellectually opposed to them doesn't mitigate the fact that he was still a beneficiary of exactly that kind of White authority here in the US.

Unlike Pat's Anglo-Saxon cousin in Raj India, White America in 1973 was still in possession of the land and resources that it stole from the indigenous inhabitants of this continent, and was still oppressing, humiliating, and murdering Black and Brown people from sea to shining sea like it always has.

Love & respect,
Leo Oladimu
Coleman, Fla.

Ida Herodotus replies: I think that it is accurate to say that the pie incident was not an attack on spirituality or on the ethnic origins of anyone.

Rather, it was a response to the fact that the guru was a representative of those who make a profitable business of requiring people to give up their self-determination, self-respect, and individual choice-making capacities, and follow the authority of others in subversive ways.

The incident took place at a time when many people on the left in North America were disappointed by the end of the anti-war, civil rights and student movements, and along with a great many people in the general population, were looking for new ways to find meaning for their lives. Many of them became followers of various religions, including some that were traditional and some that were definitely new ones tailored to attract such people.

Many of the leaders of those new religious organizations became very rich. The guru who was pied generally preached celibacy and frugal living while indulging his own desires lavishly, acquiring several very expensive cars, planes, houses, and other items, and accumulating millions of dollars for himself and his top people and his family, and flaunting it all very publicly.

He was doing the opposite of what he told his followers to do, while preaching that they had to learn to accept the differences between those at the top of the hierarchy and those lower down and to resist evaluating his or anyone else's actions.

Moreover, the guru and his devotees actively craved and sought out recognition from the political establishment and all sorts of media stars. This is why one of his admirers got the Detroit city council to give him the key to the city.

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Our 50th!

Welcome to our Spring 2015 issue, with the murderous U.S. war against Vietnam as its main theme. The essays and fiction describe the conflict itself, while next issue will feature accounts of the resistance from the anti-war movement, mutinuous GIs, and the Vietnamese.

The Fall edition will mark our 50th anniversary of radical publishing and will include essays commemorating the paper's history. Plans for a celebration, a staff reunion, and museum exhibits in Detroit are on the next and back pages.

Even if you can't come to Detroit for the celebration, you will be able to read about the history of our long publishing venture in the Fall issue.

The *Fifth Estate* became an explicitly anarchist publication in 1975 after the other 500 underground papers of the 1960s had stopped publishing. We have persisted all these years only because of reader interest and engagement.

To assure we continue for the next 50 years, we need your support with subscriptions, distribution, and articles.

We accept no advertising and although we often receive generous donations, the basic financing for this magazine comes from our readers. If you're not currently a subscriber, please consider becoming one.

You can read articles from previous issues and subscribe or donate by visiting our website at FifthEstate.org.

Or, email us at fe@fifthestate.org.

fifth estate

Radical Publishing since 1965
Vol. 50, No. 2, #394 Summer 2015

The Fifth Estate is an anti-profit, anarchist project published by a volunteer collective of friends and comrades. www.FifthEstate.org

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Anarcho-Shorts & Other Tales of the Planet

The MC5 from promotion photos for their debut album, "Kick Out the Jams."
—photo: Leni Sinclair



IT WAS FIFTY YEARS AGO THIS SUMMER that the lead singer of a band from a working class Detroit suburb screamed into a mic, "Kick out the jams, motherfucker," inaugurating a wild ride into rock history.

The music of the MC5, whose combination of rock and roll power, attitude, and connection to the revolutionary White Panther Party, made them, and their poet, marijuana advocate manager, John Sinclair, frequent targets for police suppression, arrest, and violence.

The band, which set standards for power rock and the punk movement to follow, bookended the opening and closing of Detroit's legendary Grande Ballroom between 1966 and 1972 where they shared billing with rock and roll greats like the Who, Cream, and the late BB King.

The Five practiced in the basement of our Detroit *Fifth Estate* office while

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Fifth Estate celebrates 50th year with exhibits & festivities

As this publication approaches our fiftieth anniversary in November, we have a number of events planned to mark the occasion from museum displays to a staff reunion and a dance party celebration with Detroit's Layabouts band. We want to celebrate our long existence, but also historians and museum curators have become interested in what we've published over the last half century, and the impact of the ideas contained in our articles.

Two Detroit museums will offer exhibits of *Fifth Estate* material this fall focusing mainly on the early years when we published a weekly and bi-weekly tabloid, but also recognizing our current status as an expanding anarchist magazine.

A display at the Museum of Contemporary Art-Detroit (MOCAD), "You Can't Print *That!* 50 Years of the *Fifth Estate*," will feature a reconstruction of our 1960s office with pre-computer printing technology, posters (rock and roll and anti-war), art, and the FE button and bumper sticker shop.

There will be a festive opening at MOCAD on Thursday, September 10 at the institution's Mike Kelley Homestead.

The Detroit Historical Museum will have an exhibit, "Start the Presses: 50 years of the *Fifth Estate*," featuring back issues, photographs, artifacts, and memorabilia that highlight the history of the *Fifth Estate*. It will be open to the public on Saturday, August 29.

If you have material you think will help exhibit our history for either of the museums, please let us know. We are particularly interested in filling in gaps in our collection of past issues, especially the first ten editions. Also, letters, photos, and other items you may have that should be preserved. Even if they are not used in the exhibits, we will offer them to the University of Michigan's Labadie Collection which archives radical items for historical research.

We are in the final planning stages of a dance/party/concert celebration featuring Detroit's Layabouts on Saturday, September 19. The band played for our 20th anniversary party,

so we thought we'd bring them back for an encore. Members, who are scattered as far away as Mexico, are reconstituting the group for what they say will be the final performance of their 34-year run. The Layabouts played at anarchist gatherings in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Toronto in the 1980s and are known for their radical, anarchist lyrics and irresistible ska/rock, dance beat.

The venue for this event and a planned staff reunion haven't been set as of this writing. But, once they are known, we will announce the details through our email list and social media sites. If you're not already connected, you can get updates through our web site at FifthEstate.org or by emailing fe@fifthestate.org.

And, the *Fifth Estate* is making it into another exhibit. The Modern Art Museum of the City of Paris is presenting an exhibition dedicated to Andy Warhol, which runs from October 1, 2015 to February 7, 2016.

As part of the exhibition's catalogue, they are translating an excerpt from an article in our November 15-30, 1966 issue, "Warhol Here For Mod Wedding."

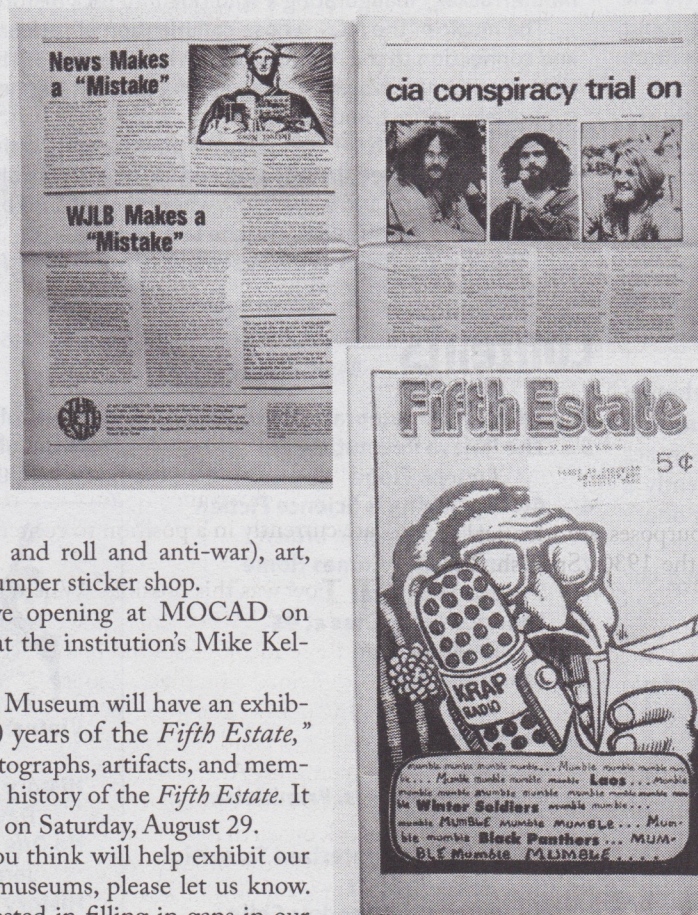
"Here" was the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit which became a venue for a three-day Carnaby Street Fun Festival featuring a wedding at which Lou Reed's Velvet Underground with Nico provided the music.

Warhol's wedding gift to the couple was an inflatable Baby Ruth candy bar measuring five feet

long. The Festival in Detroit also featured the Yardbirds, Gary Lewis and the Playboys, Sam the Sham and Dick Clark.

Whether or not you are able to attend any of these events, we hope you have found the *Fifth Estate* as stimulating and thought-provoking to read as we have to produce it.

Issues shown above are from 1970 and 1971.

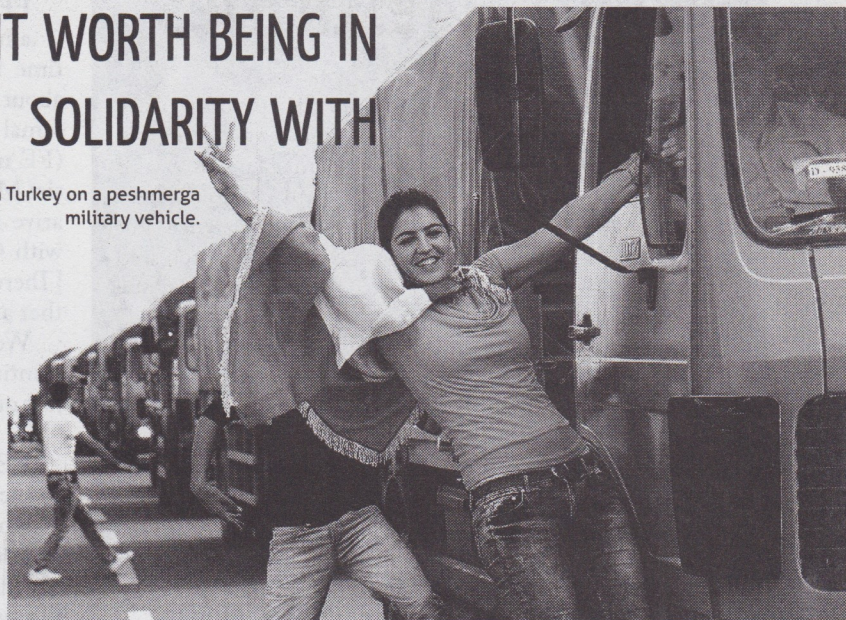


The Rojava Revolution

WORTH FIGHTING FOR; A FIGHT WORTH BEING IN SOLIDARITY WITH

A Kurdish woman from Turkey on a peshmerga military vehicle.

ANDREW FLOOD



On May 17, military forces of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) captured Ramadi, Iraq, and with it another huge stock of US-supplied modern weaponry. Six thousand US-trained Iraqi soldiers fled the city without putting up much of a fight. The ISIS force was considerably smaller and reliant on waves of suicide car bombs for its final attack. It's not hard to see why ISIS has been successful in establishing the idea that it is an unstoppable force carrying out their god's will.

But the same day, to the northwest ISIS suffered yet another major defeat at the hands of the YPJ and YPG (armed Kurdish women's and men's militias) in Rojava, or Western Kurdistan, a now de facto autonomous region in northern Syria.

These fighters, unlike the Iraqi army, are almost starved of heavy modern weaponry. Photos circulate online of self-constructed armored vehicles, often tractors with steel boxes bolted on, that for all intents and purposes are identical to the home made anarchist armor of the 1930s Spanish Revolution. They are no match for ISIS's captured US armor.

A week earlier I was in Turkey on a holiday that was also an opportunity to meet up with Turkish anarchists and get their perspective on the most controversial aspect of the Rojava revolution, the apparent transformation of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) from an authoritarian, centralized, militaristic party, to a force for popular grassroots democracy. I'd heard reports of this conversion since the mid-2000s from anarchists in Turkey and other anarchists visiting the country, but initially, I hadn't taken them seriously.

However, the sudden emergence and expansion of ISIS changed this. ISIS troops were about to overrun some place called Kobane, a predominately Kurdish city on the border between Syria and Turkey. Photographs, interviews, and video coming from there showed that many of the defenders were women.

Not just women, but women who spoke of an alternative society in terms of grassroots democracy, gender liberation, and environmentalism. And, not just women in a token role

for the camera, but entire military companies of women who clearly knew how to use their weapons and fight as a unit.

It became clear that what was happening in Rojava was quite remarkable. I'd simply hoped for an opposition to ISIS that was not another US proxy army, something with a basically democratic politics. It soon became apparent, however, that what was being advocated and implemented in Rojava was well in advance of anything revolutionaries in the West are currently in a position to contemplate.

How was this possible? Where had it come from? What we are seeing in Syria and Iraq is the clash of three ideologies. One is the West's imperialist policies in the region, militarized neoliberalism: the Middle East shall remain a vassal region for energy extraction.

The second, the motivation of those who fight for ISIS, is complex. At the simplest level, it is religious ideology that provides the cement, the conviction that they are doing god's work on earth makes their lives almost incidental in comparison with the promise of heaven. And as with most religious fanaticism, this makes the most brutal butchery of those who don't toe the line not only justified, but desirable.

At Mosul in Iraq and in Ramadi, the government armed forces, motivated mostly by paychecks, makes for poor soldiers. Give them the best of weapons, advanced command and control facilities, American advisers, and untouchable US air support, and the soldiers still decide they are not being paid enough to risk becoming bit-part players in the next ISIS murder video.

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All Organizing is Science Fiction



adrienne maree brown speaks with the *Fifth Estate* about *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*

Co-edited with Walidah Imarisha, AK Press, 2015, \$18.00, akPress.org.

D. SANDS

How do we strategize to create a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism? For author and activist, adrienne maree brown, the answer is science fiction. She's a strong believer that sci-fi and other literature can be a force for transformative social change.

To that end, with organizer and performance poet, Walidah Imarisha, she's assembled an anthology of radical science fiction, fantasy, horror, and magical realism penned by activist-writers.

The title is a nod to the late sci-fi author, Octavia Butler, whose luminary works offer radical explorations into the nature of power and oppression and open up imaginative space for social metamorphosis.

Fifth Estate spoke with brown to find out more about the anthology, Butler's influence, and the revolutionary potential of visionary fiction.

Fifth Estate: What is the connection between activism and science fiction?

adrienne maree brown: I believe all organizing is science fiction. Trying to create a world that we've never experienced and never seen is a science-fictional activity. And, to get to a world where there is no rape, no homelessness, no inequal-

ity, is going to require a good amount of future casting and future thinking, aligning ourselves into the future, exploring and playing with how we're going to get there.

FE: What can readers expect from your book?

amb: There's a lot of variety. We have zombies. We have time travel. We have gentrification. We have folks talking about disability justice. [Political prisoner] Mumia Abu-Jamal has an essay on *Star Wars* and American imperialism. (FE note: Visit freemumia.com to find out how you can assist Mumia during his current health crisis.) We have Tananarive Due, the horror writer, talking about her relationship with Octavia. Most of it is original stories, original fiction. [There's] a great deal about climate and violence and things that are very prevalent in our society right now.

We just got news that the book is selling out of its first printing, and AK Press is going to do a second printing, after just one month of it being out.

FE: Tell us how the book came about and its connection to Octavia Butler.

amb: I was reading Octavia Butler on one side of my life, and on the other side being an organizer and activist and feeling like I couldn't really talk openly about how much I loved Octavia or turned to her for strategy. A few years ago, I decided to try that.

I hosted what I call the Octavia Butler symposium in Detroit at the Allied Media Conference, and it went really well. It turns out many people are reading Octavia's work. She has basically case study after case study of protagonists who are young, black, female and who are changing the world by adapting to changing conditions. She was one of the first people to write that way, and it's very inspiring.

My co-editor, Walidah Imarisha and I became aware of each other's work. She was doing visionary fiction while I was writing out of Octavia. We started picking out the issues we wanted to hear from people around, identifying the organizers we wanted to invite to write for us, facing their resistance, helping them overcome that resistance. Many of them had never read or seen science fiction, but they were able to go ahead, and wrote amazing stories.

FE: Is it all people of color writing in the book?

amb: No. Majority people of color, majority women, but it's not all people of color. We definitely have a few writers that are white folks. One of the things we talked about was that we needed people to envision a future that all of us can be in.

FE: Sci-fi and fantasy are often dismissed as escapist literature. Some authors characterize the audience for it as reactionary. With that in mind, who did you write the book for?

amb: What we're finding for the audience is they're a lot of people who do social justice organizing and have been look-

ing for new language and new ways to be creative about the future and about visioning.

There are also people in the science fiction world who are also like: "We're really hungry for this. We're tired of seeing the same old tropes and storylines over and over again with the same people saving everyone in the end and the same dystopias."

We've been excited about talk of the Hugo Awards [for best sci-fi writing], and folks talking about diversity in sci-fi. We're here for all of that, but our first goal is to reach people in the trenches doing the work.

FE: What do you think of the revolutionary potential of visionary/speculative fiction?

amb: We do a series of workshops that line up with the book. We have people collaborating on building a world in which to explore some issue that needs what we think of as visionary fiction slapped onto it.

We find it really helps people to step outside of their norms, envision a new world together, envision solutions and think about how they could apply those solutions they came up with for outer space or whatever back to the lives that we're living.

FE: Were you surprised by anything that happened in the process of putting this book together with Walidah?

amb: I was surprised to find that a number of the folks, when we first approached them and asked them to write for us, were like: "No, I can't do this! I don't do this!" But, when the deadline hit, people came back with three, four, five times the number of pages we had asked for. Everyone has these universes inside of them, but they need permission to let that out.

FE: In addition to the book, you also have a website and workshops oriented around this work. Do you see *Octavia's Brood* as a literary movement?

amb: I think so. I hope so. We've often had people asking that. Is this the beginning of a series of anthologies? Or, what's next? There's a big part of me that's like, "No calm down. Let's just be happy about this right now. This took five years." But, I also feel the sense that there's more out there to explore, and I'm hoping people want to take that on and start to classify their work in this way or long to be involved in this kind of work.

D. Sands lives and writes in Detroit



Cara Hoffman's new novel examines the consequences of war when a damaged soldier returns home to a small town & she's still in battle-ready mode

Be Safe I Love You

Cara Hoffman

Simon & Schuster, paper edition 2015, 289 pp. \$26

What sacred thing could pass through her lips now? What choir could shield her from the sound of her own voice?

"I did terrible things," she said.

"Of course you did, Troy said calmly. "Don't let anyone tell you otherwise."

—from the text

MARIEKE BIVAR

Cara Hoffman's new novel is about a soldier with PTSD coming home to small town America. Many of the themes she explored in her debut, *So Much Pretty*, surface again in *Be safe I love you*: isolation, poverty, environmental destruction, and the erosion of community.

Lauren Clay is a soldier returning from Iraq where she has witnessed acts and participated in violence that is routine for the military stationed there. When she is forced to reintegrate into another kind of routine, that of the small town life that is waiting for her back home, Lauren starts to see the cracks in her own armor and slowly enters a downward spiral that triggers her survival mode, taking her family with her on one final mission that "brings the war home."

It's hard to read this novel as explicitly anti-capitalist, much less anarchist, but its illustration of impact of violence lead the London Sunday Telegraph to declare it "one of the five best modern war novels. And, this from an author who hadn't experienced war directly.

Although Hoffman's motivation seems to be to humanize and complicate the soldier narrative, she is very careful not to put words in her protagonist's mouth, to the point that she allows Lauren a righteous suspicion of any civilian input, whether from her leftist father or her former civil rights activist and Vietnam vet godfather, PJ.

Yet the bones of an anti-capitalist critique are there, in the doppelganger oil rigs of Iraq and Que-

bec, in the internet-age alienation Lauren's brother Danny leaves behind when his computer and cell phone are taken away and replaced with wilderness, in Lauren's decision to sell her body to the army, and in the way she and her friend Daryl know the real reason for the war, reading left-wing news sites as they wait to be deployed.

Besides this skeleton, there is also the knowledge that Hoffman, however careful she is in framing a collective story gleaned from her interviews with soldiers (including her brother who served two tours in Afghanistan), does possess such a critique, yet lets the story generate its own questions, cast its own contradictions, and ultimately leave us without an ending that we, as anti-capitalists, can feel glib about.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been the backdrop to the protest movements and financial crises of the past fifteen years, and we are nowhere near seeing the end of the impact they will have not only directly, on those being invaded and attacked by "our" armies, but also in cities like Lauren Clay's place of birth, Watertown, N.Y.

The city Lauren returns to is haunted by soldiers from the first Gulf War and Vietnam. The local vets are so omnipresent and damaged that Lauren repeats an army mantra to herself to avoid associating her experience with theirs. This mantra goes something like: she and her fellow Iraq vets are different, better trained, more prepared for the aftereffects of combat, their weaponry better, their war unlike any other.

Yet as her mental and emotional states begin to swing out of her control, we can see that neither believing in these premises nor associating with other vets is helping Lauren navigate her trauma.

Like she did in *So Much Pretty*, Hoffman uses narrative to reveal the silences that make the violence of everyday life go unexamined and unaddressed. In this book, the subject matter she meticulously researched is also a part of her own story.

In a recent interview, Hoffman revealed that until she began writing *Be safe I love you*, she had never asked her army vet brother to tell her about his combat experiences. This collective fear of facing the true war stories, those that aren't memorialized in the official national narratives of heroic war movies and other propaganda, creates a context that suffocates soldiers like Lauren as they put on the face of the "returning warrior" they are expected to be.

Be safe I love you, which is being made into a movie by Saudi director Haifaa al-Mansour, is also about the growing demographic of working-poor families struggling to make ends meet in the age of austerity. Joining the army may seem like a choice among many to Lauren's friends Holly and Shane, but Lauren is the one who makes it knowing there aren't many other careers she can have with a high school education that will immediately ensure her family home isn't foreclosed on and her brother Danny won't have to fend for himself when she leaves home.

Although Hoffman doesn't let Lauren off the hook with this argument, it demonstrates the incredible pressure and at-

traction that draws people into the armed forces, the promises of "signing bonuses, the GI Bill and the size of the checks."

While we may oppose capitalism's wars and denounce "Support Our Troops" rhetoric spouted by liberals and conservatives alike, there is something unavoidable about the trauma and poverty often faced by war veterans. The Vietnam conflict is still having social repercussions, with suicide and homelessness part of that never-ending war story those vets share with the ones from Iraq.

This means that as radicals, we are invested in struggles that are attempting to address the traumas of wars past and present, whether we work on issues like homelessness, are part of the anti-poverty movement, support those living with mental health issues or the aftermath of sexual assault.

However, we still need to deal directly with war in a manner that doesn't pose U.S. casualties or its veterans as its main victims. Organizing against the empire's continuous invasions attempts to protect those who are ground up by the imperial forces and trying to keep people like Lauren Clay from becoming part of the war monster in the first place.

With the growing number of stories of sexual assault and rape in the army coming to light, women in combat are often victims of the same institution they are representing. Yet this is not that story.

This is about a woman who has found success in the army, become an officer, and even made it home uninjured. It is the story of how women are now protagonists in wars, too. Lauren Clay's is a new, less familiar face of war, with needs that are both unique and similar to those of men who have returned from combat. This means her story and those like hers are already affecting us collectively, in homes, on the street, in our organizing.

This may be one of the first times we hear the story of this new kind of war veteran, but it won't be the last.

Marieke Bivar is a writer, freelance translator, and member of the l'Insoumise anarchist bookstore collective in Montreal.

Cara Hoffman's writing in the *Fifth Estate* can be viewed in our web site's Archive section. See also CaraHoffman.com.

50th Anniversary Edition Call for Submissions Fall 2015

Themes for Fall 2015 will be our 50th anniversary and resistance to the U.S. Vietnam War.

Submit manuscripts for short pieces and proposals for longer essays, along with graphics and photographs, to:

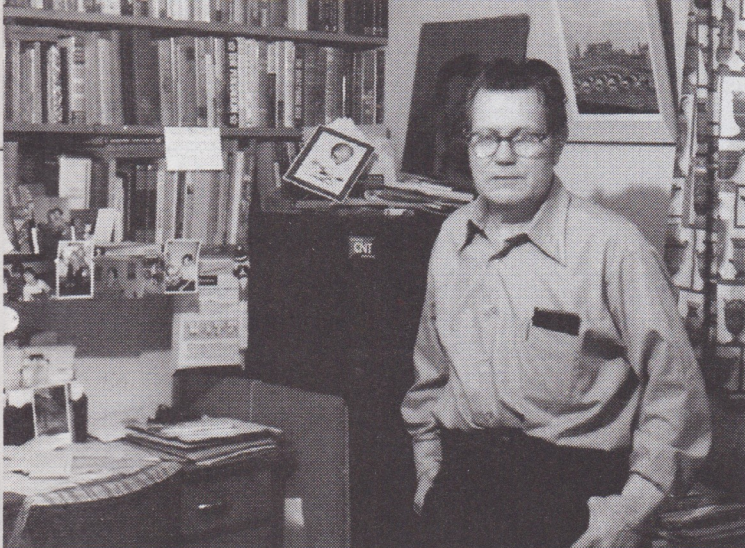
fe@fiftheestate.org or Fifth Estate, PO Box 201016, Ferndale, MI 48220, USA.

Please put "Submission 395" on subject line of email.

We also seek non-theme submissions on general topics.

Submission deadline: September 15

Publication date: October 15



Federico, 1981, in his Windsor home with part of his anarchist archive.

A Stalwart of the Spanish Revolution Passes

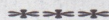
Federico Arcos

July 18, 1920 – May 26, 2015

As we go to print, it is with great sadness that we report the passing of our *compañero, amigo, padre,* and *abuelo*, Federico Arcos, in Windsor, Ontario, at the age of 94.

The last several months were very difficult for him, but all in all he lived long, fully, and admirably. He stood for lasting and noble human values. He cared about human beings and the Earth. He believed in justice and freedom and human solidarity and compassion. He had a powerful and permanent effect on us.

For now, since we can't write at length about our dear friend, we are publishing the following text, based on a tribute addressed to him in Detroit on his 80th birthday.



Federico was the son of *gente humilde, obreros*. He grew up breathing the air of anarchist fervor in the old CNT districts of Barcelona in the 1920s and '30s. One of his early memories was of reading the anarchist press aloud to the gathered *compañeros* and *vecinos* in his neighborhood because not all could read.

When the revolution came in 1936, he took his place in the fight, doing what needed to be done, whether it was teaching a comrade to read, running through a firefight to fetch ammunition, or sharing a crust of bread — giving his energy and youth fully to *el Ideal*, and learning in the process that such sacrifice brings greater rewards than anything the egoism of bourgeois society could ever offer.

Federico suffered for his beliefs and principles. He saw the revolution defeated. He was forced into exile in France where he had to hide from the Vichy police. After returning to Spain, he spent time in jail and was forced into compulsory military service. He later participated in the anti-Franco underground, and saw many of the friends of his youth die in the underground movement and in exile.

In 1952 he emigrated to Canada and found a vibrant an-

archist community across the river in Detroit, mostly Europeans—Spaniards, Eastern Europeans, and Italians. Federico was one of the youngest members of that community. In the 1970s he found us, and in time became our elder, our *abuelo*.

Federico worked much of his life in a Ford factory. He was a loyal and respected rank-and-file union comrade, participating in the historic 110-day Canadian Auto Workers strike in Windsor in 1955.

Meanwhile, he gradually gathered one of the foremost anarchist archives in North America, indeed, in the world, in his modest home. He is thanked in numerous books by historians who came to work there and were welcomed and usually fed by Federico and his wife Pura Arcos, who had her own anarchist history, and whom we dearly loved. (Pura died in 1995. We will reprint her memorial in our next issue.)

Federico loved poetry, produced a charming collection of his own, with elegies to his fallen comrades and meditations on the human condition. He was a compendium of poems, songs, and proverbs, and could recite impressive amounts of poetry by heart. He believed in the power of the word, just as he believed in the power of love, of friendship, of loyalty, of justice, of freedom.

Federico lived modestly, deriving his pleasures not from material things or from empty status but from solidarity and a revolutionary passion. He was a dedicated comrade, always arriving early to work on projects or to visit friends. He never suggested putting something off that could be accomplished immediately. He stepped forward, even as his knees, or back, or lungs sometimes protested against his spirit.

From his youth as a member of *los Quijotes del Ideal* in the Barrio de Gracia in revolutionary Barcelona in 1937, to his involvement in Black & Red and the *Fifth Estate*, he maintained his ideals and principles. He proved by example that one may lose great historic battles, and yet triumph in life.

One of Federico's most vivid stories was from after the fall of the Spanish Republic in 1939, when the refugees, Federico among them, were crossing into France, ill, dispirited, unsure of the future, and weak with hunger. He would recall with a smile and a kind of wonder how they gathered acorns to eat there under the oaks, and how they were sustained.

Those who have read *Don Quixote* will likely know that since classical times the oak tree has been a symbol of the Golden Age. Behind young Fede Arcos (as his friends knew him), not yet nineteen years old, lay the ruins of one of history's brief Golden Ages, and one of the most sublime dreams human beings have dreamed.

Ahead lay great uncertainty—and we know now, more violence, calamity, disappointment. But the *compañeros y compañeras* gathered and ate the acorns and were sustained. And their dream sustains us.

Federico Arcos lived a life of passion and commitment with that new world always in his heart, reminding us, as Rousseau once remarked, that the Golden Age is neither before us nor behind, but within.

—David Watson

Storm Warnings: The personal is political... & historical



We Are the Birds of the Coming Storm

Lola Lafon

Seagull Books, 2014,

translated from the

French by David and

Nicole Ball

Originally published in

2011 as *Nous sommes*

les oiseaux de la tempête

qui s'annonce

FERAL SAGE

We are the Birds of the Coming Storm is French author Lola Lafond's third novel, and the first to be translated into English. It is the story of three women whose lives converge and intertwine during a time of personal and political upheaval.

It is set in present-day Paris, during the presidential election period against the backdrop of a crescendo of radical activism in opposition to the increasingly repressive State.

Having barely survived a cardiac arrest, Émile is on life support. There is only a small chance she will survive. Having exhausted the powers of medical science and technology, doctors and nurses can only monitor her vital signs and keep her comfortable while waiting for death to arrive...or perhaps not.

Her friend, the nameless narrator, stays at her bedside writing what she calls, "A Diary of Her Unlived Life." When she is not keeping vigil, her thoughts are an ongoing conversation with the absent Émile.

Through her musings we learn that Émile is a radical social worker. After being raped by a stranger, Émile has tried to maintain control over the meaning of her experience by turning it into "an ironic, ferocious misadventure," refusing to play the role of victim. She reaches her own limit when, one day, her heart simply stops beating.

The narrator is a dancer, classically trained at the Ballet School of the Bucharest Opera in the former Romanian Socialist Republic, where she developed her art under the ubiquitous eyes and ears of the *Securitate*, the State secret police. "Our bodies made do with these conditions, moved according to the grotesque, ever-changing rules of the *Conducător*, the communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, and dodged his relentless efforts to shrink our lives."

As an exile living in a Democracy she once only dreamed of, she has tried to invent a new life as a dancer with France's National Ballet. That dream is crushed when she is raped by her boyfriend, a respected man in the arts community with whom she shares mutual acquaintances; a vengeful man intent on teaching her that she is nothing.

She and Émile are drawn to one another in a support

group for women who are living in what the dancer calls a "democracy of rape." They are a diverse group. They could be any woman. Their rapists, a doctor, a family member, a group of co-workers, a stranger, a boyfriend, could be any man.

The dancer learns that being the victim of the crime of rape is not a simple matter in this democracy. Pressing charges involves following procedures that include a psychiatric evaluation designed to detect the truthfulness of the allegation, and a trial in which the determination of guilt or innocence is influenced by the sex and socioeconomic status of the parties.

The acquaintances she shares with the rapist question the reality of her experience, inferring that it might have been a simple misunderstanding. "As people keep politely suggesting silence to me and I obey, Dance leaves my body, declaring it a pariah, contaminated."

Trying to recover their lives, the two women have agreed not to speak about the details of the event that brought them together, nor about the worsening political situation around them. They meet often to suspend reality watching old films at a local repertory theatre.

While Émile remains in the hospital recovering her memories after her near-death, the dancer meets the enigmatic, waif-like woman they have often seen at the Cinéma-thèque writing in her notebook during the films. Émile has named her "the Little Girl," appending "who lives at the end of the lane" because "the kid's at the end of the end in my opinion."

The Little Girl has noticed them, too. Watching them share their M&Ms, acutely aware of her own loneliness, she writes in one of her texts, "Someone. Who would protect my absurd manias" and "would not be anxiously watching out for them, brandishing the box of anti-depressants at the slightest suspicion."

To introduce the dancer to the 19th century American feminist anarchist, Voltairine de Cleyre, the Little Girl gives her a letter she wrote recounting the story of the Haymarket events in Chicago that began on May 1, 1886, when a general strike broke out in several cities in the United States. Workers were demanding an end to the mechanisation of labour and the use of child labour, and calling for an eight-hour workday.

In Chicago, thousands of workers demonstrated. They were attacked by strikebreakers and police in a hail of rocks and bullets that left six strikers dead and hundreds wounded. August Spies, the anarchist editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (*Workers Daily*) called for a peaceful demonstration to be held

the following day.

Near the end of the demonstration, police declared it illegal and began attacking the demonstrators. Suddenly, a bomb went off and police began shooting into the crowd. The seven policemen and dozens of demonstrators who were killed may all have been shot by police, since they were the only ones known to have been carrying weapons.

Although the bomb-thrower has never been identified, hundreds of people were arrested, and four men including Spies, were hanged. The Little Girl ruefully observes: "Today in Paris, on May First, resigned crowds march along the customary route," chanting words that "are merely pretences of threats and combats." She is enraged when she sees "these gatherings circumscribed by policemen and garbage trucks following them slowly, picking up and erasing the traces of a disorder that has not occurred."

She mentions in a postscript that de Cleyre, wrote a poem ("The Hurricane") for the Haymarket martyr Spies, beginning with the words spoken by him during the trial: "We are the birds of the coming storm."

The birds the Little Girl sees everywhere are falling birds, dead and dying birds. She calls the dancer "Voltairine." Later, in the Little Girl's room, the dancer notices a postcard picturing a young woman who "looks like she's asking a question and...won't give up before she gets an answer." The Little Girl tells her that this is Voltairine de Cleyre.

In her writing, sometimes stream-of-consciousness, sometimes cogent theorising, and her poetry filled with gruesome imagery, the Little Girl claws away at the wrapping of everyday life to reveal the true horror of existence under the State. The election has brought into focus the machinery of control, invisible to those who improvise their daily lives according to its unwritten script, while the mainstream media normalize the reality of racism and xenophobia and the criminalization of poverty and dissent.

The Little Girl identifies the election as the reason for her state of "generic rage," as her attention is constantly drawn to what the government is doing, "waiting for things to get worse, with my mouth wide open to them." Mental health authorities have given her the psychiatric label of "oppositional disorder," of "being in opposition to one's surroundings," and insist that the real reason for her distress is her radical rejection of biological destiny.

A man in her life, variously referred to as her boyfriend, her fiancé, and her husband (suggesting, perhaps, that any difference among these roles is illusory, as their common function—indeed their purpose—is to circumscribe a woman's being within a man's manageable space), collaborates with mental health authorities by continually suggesting that she take her psychiatric meds.

While Émile has been a stabilizing influence in Voltairine's life, the Little Girl is an explosive one. Émile has shown her how to navigate the System; the Little Girl encourages her to break its hold on her mind, beginning with an act of solidarity that defies the power of the man who has com-

manded Voltairine's silence. Soon they are participating in a series of increasingly daring acts of civil disobedience.

The relationships that develop among these women are intricately woven into a story of our time, as we find ourselves listening to the maddening hypocrisy of political pronouncements that hide monstrous cruelty behind innocuous-sounding phrases like "collateral damage" and "enhanced interrogation." Of necessity, we are caught up in seemingly futile efforts to mitigate the destructive effects of increasingly feudalistic social policies designed to ensure that we will not go "to the end of the road."

We are reminded that Haymarket did not spark a revolution. Rather, it ushered in a period of repression aimed at crushing a revolution, followed by reforms that mollified the revolutionary mood of the workers' movement.

And yet, the fires that were ignited have remained, burning underground, flaring up now and then, here and there, throughout the world. *We are the Birds of the Coming Storm* is a brilliantly sobering novel that does not suggest that revolution is on the horizon, only that the potential exists.

Our visionary birds will continue to fall and die, but we know that the storm is approaching.

Feral Sage is a feminist anarchist writer who blogs occasionally at feral.sage.org. She is a member of the Anarchist Writers Bloc in Montreal and has had two short stories published in its anthologies of anarchist short fiction, *Subversions*. She is currently writing a novel and a memoir.

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The Rojava Revolution

Continued from Page 5

ISIS, on the other hand, has no problem convincing over a dozen people to drive explosive-laden vehicles at enemy positions where they detonate the bombs and themselves.

In the aftermath of ISIS's similar capture of Mosul and Tikrit last year, they seemed unstoppable. Then these fanatics met the new women of Kobane. Although most of the Kurdish defense forces are men, for this discussion it is the women who are central to the differences in ideology.

The third ideology is embodied by the YPJ and YPG resisters. They are fighting for liberation at the same time as they are fighting reaction. Not only are they fighting to avoid being enslaved or raped and beheaded by ISIS soldiers, they are also struggling to transform their socially repressive society. This is what motivated perhaps hundreds of Kurdish women to face a near certain death and worse in the front lines against ISIS last year, carrying only AK 47 rifles.

In late autumn, ISIS forces approached the YPG and YPJ positions in the countryside using the captured armor which rendered them almost invulnerable. Videos reveal ISIS tanks driving fearlessly up and down in front of YPG/J fighters who could only crouch in the ruins of houses and hope for a lucky shot.

When ISIS reached the city of Kobane, having rapidly conquered the entire canton, it seemed that the fighting could not last long. The city is comparatively small and overlooked by Mistanour Hill, which ISIS rapidly took despite a heroic defense by the YPJ. But, suddenly the advance was halted and Kurds began to compare their resistance to that of besieged Stalingrad during World War II. After 130 days of fighting, they repelled ISIS and eventually chased them out of the area.

One explanation for the military success is the change of US policy. When Kobane looked doomed the US dropped weapons for the Kurdish forces and carried out air strikes against ISIS positions. Still, it does not explain why ISIS is being driven out of Rojava even as they advance elsewhere in Syria and Iraq.

The explanation is on the terrain of ideology. Those fighting ISIS in Rojava are fighting for something that is worth dying for, not monthly pay packets. This is why many other fighters have come across the border to fight with the Kurds. During the siege of Kobane, supporters were going to what looked like an almost certain death, and many, in fact, were killed.

Anarchists and others in Turkey aided Kobane despite the considerable risk of Turkish government repression. As I write in late May, four people have just been arrested in Istanbul during a Construction Workers Union protest calling for safe passage to Kobane.



The key to understanding what is happening in Rojava is that it is not simply part of global capitalism, but a region where tribal-feudal structures of domination still exist. Class conflict is often as much anti-feudal in character as anti-capitalist.

This understanding is central to the prominent role gender liberation plays in the revolt. The strength of tribal-feudalism in Kurdistan revolves around the ability of powerful men to dominate women and other men through arranged marriages and so called honor killings.

An example of what they are fighting for and against helps define both the gender liberation aspect of the revolution and the tribal-feudal aspects of their society. The women's organization Yekîtiya Star says it is "autonomously organized in all walks of life, from defense to economy to education to health.

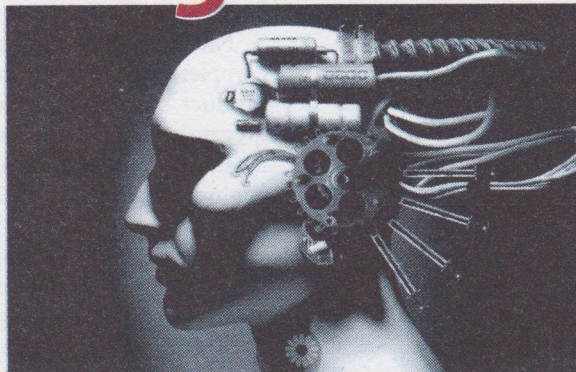
Autonomous women's councils exist parallel to the people's councils and can veto the latter's decisions. Men committing violence against women are not supposed to be part of the administration. Gender-based discrimination, forced marriages, domestic violence, honor killings, polygamy, child marriage, and bride price are criminalized"

The publication of the Zapatista's EZLN Women's Revolutionary Law in 1994 had a strong impact on women revolutionaries in Kurdistan who face many of the same oppressions. This was part of the story of why women militants of the PKK started to push for their own organizations and their own command structure in the military. Gender liberation is not an aspect added on to impress western radicals, but fundamental to transformation of their society.

Something worth fighting for and a fight worth being in solidarity with.

Andrew Flood lives in Ireland. @andrewflood on twitter

Technological Biteback



While many of us dream of green forests and a restored natural world, there are others who embrace the machine to the extent of desiring to become one. Echoing the horrors of dystopian sci-fi novels, transhumanism and singularity advocates, celebrate the merging of the human brain with computers. But, this grotesque movement comes at a time when there is growing apprehension of what technological Frankensteins have created.

In this section, we examine how quickly paradigms can change and the impact of cyber-technology.



To many, it seems there will be no escape from the dominant reality, no alternative to an irredeemably darkened modernity as civilization's final, lasting mode. We are indeed currently trapped, and the nature of our imprisonment is not subject to scrutiny. Its very existence is off-limits to discourse.

An October 2014 *New Yorker* cartoon shows two lab-coated technicians in front of a subatomic particle collider. One of them declares, "Once you have a collider, every problem starts to look like a particle." The system itself defines what is real, just as a mammoth industrial base produces a corresponding picture of physics, as in the cartoon. Everything looks like a particle and nothing else is seen. Or, seen but not seen, worth only lip service at best, not really thought about or taken seriously.

**A shift is
already
underway,
though not
yet in
sufficiently
valid terms**

Of course, the way we look at things can change. Thomas Kuhn's 1962 *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* attacked the prevailing idea of how models or paradigms of science change. Instead of cumulative, positivist development, in which evidence builds up, slowly altering the prevailing outlook, Kuhn argued that shifts usually happen rather suddenly in a kind of "quantum leap" fashion. This conceptual switch approach is now mainly taken for granted as a description of how science paradigms actually change.

A paradigm shift in perception may be far more sudden. For instance, a drawing of a young woman that—with a second look—portrays a very old woman. Or, in another example, a duck becomes a rabbit.

In terms of real-world shifts, the technology-worshipping transhumanists predict the Singularity, coming fairly soon, when techno-advances will

cross a threshold and transcend every current issue, including mortality. Artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and genetic engineering will meld machine and humanity into a new super-existence!

Proponents of this pathological project overlook the fact that technology is systematically destroying nature and shredding our humanness along the way. Transhumanism represents more of the same, the latest manic drive to dominate all of life, yet another manifestation of civilization's inner predictability. A "radical break" must be the radical reversal of such an outlook.

The deep malaise and melancholy of modernity, its dreariness and distancing, have spread everywhere; there is less and less room for escape. Almost nothing is left outside the totalizing Machine.

We live in a paradigm inaugurated by domestication, nine or ten thousand years ago. Its costs at every level are everywhere apparent. "While there is a beggar, there is a myth," according to Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades Project*. There's a necessary paradigm, an overriding schema that justifies what is, including the existence of beggars.

Our own natures have been besieged, along with every other domesticate, under this reigning paradigm. It is possible to see things in a very different light, even though basic questioning is illegitimate under the reigning sign of domestication.

Benjamin also asserted that the smallest cell of visualized reality already outweighs the prevailing perspective. Especially when the old, dominant paradigm cannot explain what

is unfolding, e.g., the chronic multiple homicide events. A shift is already underway, though not yet in sufficiently valid terms: the massive erosion of faith in all public institutions, for example.

Nietzsche called for a "transvaluation of all values," but completely missed the centrality of domestication, and its product, culture. At some point the balance tips and the aggregate cost or toll, the anxiety, emptiness, sense of no future, is felt more acutely. Domination/civilization had a historical beginning. It may have a historical end—which would be the end of history.

Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno gives a relevant insight: "To the child it is self-evident that what delights him in his favorite village is found only there, there alone and nowhere else. He is mistaken; but his mistake creates the model of experience."

This has to do with unique experience itself, and reminds one of Situationist Raoul Vaneigem's wonderful comments on the still-free zone of childhood, and what cannot be exchanged for something else.

At the end of *Minima Moralia* is my favorite line by Adorno. "The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption."

John Zerzan lives in Eugene, Ore. and writes frequently for this magazine. johnzerzan.net. He hosts "Anarchy Radio," Tuesdays, 7pm, PST, which streams through KWVA 88.1.

Debate at Stanford: Zoltan Istvan & John Zerzan

Transhumanism vs. Primitivism

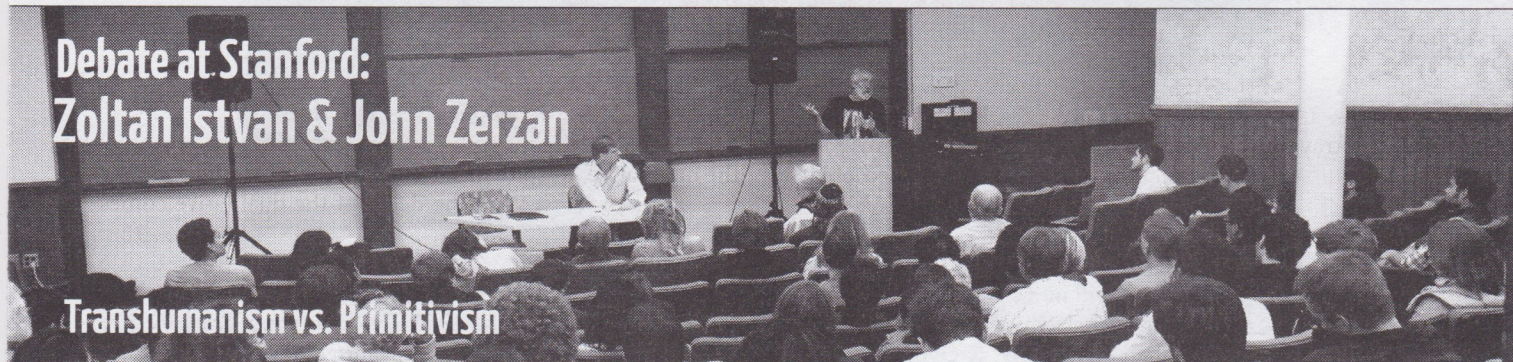


photo: Kourosh Afrashteh/Project Prometheus

BELLAMY

“Come and hear the views of two thinkers who arguably have defined the two polar opposite views on the effects of technology,” blared the invitation to a November 15 debate between Transhumanist Zoltan Istvan and Anarcho-Primitivist John Zerzan at California's Stanford University.

Grimacing at the clash of the titansesque rhetoric that epitomized the debaters, I nonetheless made my way eagerly to the college, just south of San Francisco, to watch the spectacle unfold.

As part of the audience “in the very back, who some suggested were black bloc participants,” as Istvan wrote in a post-debate *Huffington Post*, evincing a palpable fear of anarchists that, by his own admission, had him considering or perhaps actually wearing a bulletproof vest to the debate.

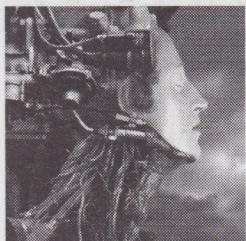
I should reveal to readers that Zerzan's *Elements of Refusal* had a tremendous influence on me and remains one of my most recommended books. That being said, Zerzan and I have areas of disagreement, and I do not consider myself an uncritical loyalist.

The ideology of Transhumanism has diverse adherents and interpretations, but most share an extremely optimistic view of history as an objective increase in human knowledge, material wealth,

and technological faculty. Extrapolating forward, they argue we can soon expect to transcend our humanity through an amalgamation of bionic organs, genetic manipulation, and total interface with machines, up to and including the complete shedding of the human body.

Istvan, who recently announced his candidacy for the U.S. presidency in 2016, contrasted an unacknowledgedly Hobbesian portrait of primitive life as dirty, unpleasant, sickly, and ignorant with a view evoking a kind of Ayn Randian humanism. To Istvan, the individual manifesting their power through applied rationalism and technology seemed a self-evident virtue exemplified by, in his words, “shoot[ing] our Tweets off to our friends,” the “8,000 planes in the sky,” and the conquest of Nature, with which, he asserted, humans are “in complete conflict.”

Zerzan encapsulated his case by labeling Transhumanism “an unhealthy fantasy.” He continued with the Anarcho-Primitivist mainstay that it is relatively uncontroversial in



To Istvan, the individual manifesting their power through applied rationalism and technology seemed a self-evident virtue.

modern anthropology that peoples living in gatherer-hunter band society were and are prevalently pacific, egalitarian, robust, and nonpatriarchal.

He lamented the death of community via mass society and emphasized the inability of mainstream culture to offer any real critique of psychosocial phenomenon such as mass shootings, arguing its inability lay in the fact that to do so would betray the alienation engendered by this culture.

Unfortunately, the structure of the debate entailed obvious restrictions in the breadth and depth of dialogue. The opponents were only allowed opening remarks, a rebuttal, and a conclusion, with neither having the opportunity to question one another nor to give a midway summary speech. One attendee remarked in the immediate aftermath, “I was hoping for more of a bloodbath!”

At times, the competitors were, as Zerzan acknowledged, “shooting past each other.” Though both referred to Nature numerous times, for instance, exactly what was meant by that bleached term and what that definition’s implications were vis-à-vis a human/nature dichotomy or human/nonhuman relationships were left mostly unspoken. When Zerzan articulated the possibility that Technopositivism is replacing political ideologies as an abstract authority, the point was left unaddressed and lost in the debate except for some loosely related statements by Istvan later about the importance of democratic controls on the development of artificial intelligence.

Still, points of conflict were present. Subjectivity was fea-

tured prominently in both speakers’ initial opening speeches. Istvan argued initially that technopositivism was “better for our happiness [and] spirit.” Later, though, he conceded that Anarcho-Primitivists had a better case when it came to happiness and community, though he then denied the importance of happiness, reducing it to “just a bunch of neurons firing” and insisting it, along with mass shootings, “will be overcome” by future technology.

Istvan’s statements pithily express the archetypal perspective of consciousness held by most adherents of the related tendencies of Transhumanism and artificial intelligence. It is a computational and materialistic view of the mind, one that underlies an interesting paradox.

On the one hand, you have the Transhumanist understatement if not outright denial of subjectivity; the argument that consciousness, or subjective phenomenological experience, is not at all mysterious, but instead explicable entirely in material terms. Where its existence is acknowledged, its

Zerzan lamented the death of community via mass society and emphasized the inability of mainstream culture to offer any real critique of psychosocial phenomenon.



importance is dismissed.

At its zenith, one ends up in the borderline Behaviorist perspectives of the likes of philosopher of science Daniel Dennett, saying “Consciousness is a bunch of tricks in the brain.” Unintentionally completing his statement is artificial intelligence pioneer, Marvin Minsky: “When you know how the magic trick works, then the sense of wonder goes away.” Such voracious reductionism denies the very existence of the qualitative, in spite of serious arguments to the contrary among their peers. With the death of the qualitative comes the triumph of the quantitative with its attendant mutilation of subjective life.

Accompanying this death of the subject is a forfeiture of personal agency. Some Transhumanists express this with a salivating eagerness, awaiting the realization. Others, oddly, express mild to severe reservations about the possibility of catastrophe or genocide, but nonetheless maintain that it is unstoppable. Humanity, it would seem, is a mere passive pawn in the progress of the Machine.

When life is entirely measurable and divisible, it becomes impossible not to conceptualize it as an ever diminishing stack of uniform moments – yawning death steadily devouring our stack. And, there we find the second half of the Transhumanist paradox: the allergy to death.

In his Three Laws of Transhumanism, Istvan expresses brazenly that one’s first priority ought to be the avoidance of death, which he has called the “most important goal” of his philosophy. This drive manifests itself in such absurdities as

his proposed “Jethro Knights Life Extension tax.” The plan calls for every adult human being on the planet to donate one percent of their personal net worth towards life extension science - “the world can conquer death in about a decade’s time if enough resources are put towards it,” according to Istvan.

Even more extreme is his proposition that we might all achieve immortality by uploading our minds to become virtual avatars, which, in light of persuasive arguments that consciousness is not reducible to computation, seems a death urge. Somehow, we must both deny that life is truly lived and felt even as we consider its un-lived permanence of the utmost importance.

It is difficult not to make psychological inferences when confronted with such feverishness - is Transhumanism a case study in Terror Management Theory, the anxiety caused by one’s knowledge of mortality?

As life becomes more drained and mediated, and as the threat of death abounds in a toxic and violent culture, many are clinging more and more fiercely to ideology.

Indeed, Istvan acknowledges that his interest in Transhumanism accelerated when he had a neardeath experience of stepping on a landmine. He has also stated that, were he able, he would monitor his daughters with drones and implants in order to protect them from death and injury.

With such considerations, Transhumanism seems the ideology of Progress’s ultimate realization. The qualitative implications of Progress are manifold: the inadequacy of the human being as such, the loss of immediate presence, and the Productionist ethos that demands sacrifice now for future gain.

Whereas, Classical Greece demanded the enslavement of some so that others might engage in contemplative life for intellectual progress and the modern society condones ecocide for the sake of raising the Commodity’s standard, Transhumanism would throw the whole world on the pyre, in the ultimate abstracted Progress that seems to envision an absolution for the human race in the form of the resurrection of a quasideific entity: a greaterthanhuman intelligence that they envision ushering in a new era.

While it is likely that much of the debate’s

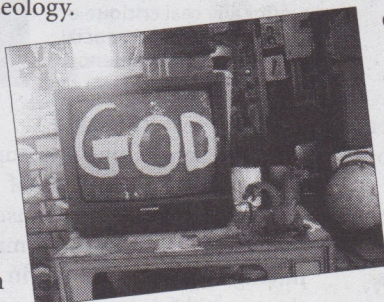
audience was polarized, its subsequent touting in the Huffington Post, courtesy of Istvan, undoubtedly allowed post-left anarchy a blip of recognition in the mainstream in a way that did nothing to dilute the iconoclasm of its content. In the post-left anarchist’s eternal tension between being averse to proselytizing and propagandizing while still seeing a need to circulate their ideas, should public debates such as this one be seen as a viable tactic, or is such an event yet another case of anarchists uselessly trying to make the media work for us?

Certainly, the debate’s attendance and Istvan’s popularity shows that the Transhumanists have managed to make the media work quite well for them.

An incredible, and thoroughly sad and pathetic, ideology has taken hold largely due to the fear of death, reification of time, and a fevered adherence to the myth of Progress, a logical extension of the Enlightenment values that Zerzan critiqued in his “Time and its Discontents”:

“[...] the modern idea of progress, closely related to that of unbounded linear time, [...] expresses] itself in [Descartes’] famous invitation that we become ‘masters and possessors of nature.’ [...] Time is now the grand ruler, answering to no one, influenced by nothing, completely independent of the environment: the model of unassailable authority and perfect guarantor of unchanging alienation.”

Bellamy is one of the co-hosts and co-creators of West Oakland’s Free Radical Radio, a green anarchist podcast available at freeradicalradio.net. FRR advances an anti-civilization critique informed, variously and chaotically, by anarcho-primitivism, egoism, nihilism, permaculture, and science fiction.



Object from Heidelberg Project, Detroit. Destroyed by arson 2015. —photo Peter Werbe Heidelberg.org

The Control of Computerized Television

Predicted by Fifth Estate 30 years ago, but it arrived in an unexpected form (except by Dick Tracy)

JASON RODGERS

In another age, in a different lifetime, David Watson (under the name, George Bradford) wrote in the Spring 1984 *Fifth Estate*: “While there may be reason for concern about computer threats to privacy, it is generally overlooked that deepening privatization, with a computerized television in every room as its apotheosis, is itself at least as great a threat—a threat which makes the police almost superfluous.”

Right there, Bradford predicted the smart phone. But, acutely aware as he was, he couldn’t predict that this “computerized television” would be miniaturized and carried everywhere.

The quote appeared in his essay, “1984: Worse Than Expected?,” reflecting on George Orwell’s famously ominous year. It is a bit scary how closely this essay predicted the technocratic, totalitarian society we currently find ourselves entangled within. What is frightening is that he wasn’t prescient enough. He couldn’t predict how universally and enthusiastically this technology would be adopted by the populace. He couldn’t imagine how expansive the virtual reality arena could become, how much social and personal space it could occupy.

How did this situation come about? The electronics, digital media, and other technology transform the ways we communicate. Through the controls of communication, our thought processes are controlled, and ultimately the nature of society. Bradford writes: "Once we realize that this pseudo-communication represents the central code of alienated, totalitarian discourse, we realize that its infrastructure and its result are mass society itself."

Guy Debord's more negative (and paranoid) follow-up to *Society of the Spectacle*, his 1988 *Comments on The Society of the Spectacle*, did much to correct his previous positive outlook on the potential of technology.

In it, this founding member of the Situationist International states, "The computer's binary language is an irresistible inducement to the continual and unreserved acceptance of what has been programmed according to the wishes of someone else and passes for the timeless source of a superior, impartial and total logic."

The computer allows for a level of control previously unheard of. It also automates control and renders it invisible. Computer users feel they are receiving information from which they can make their own conclusions. But it is not pure information, there is no such beast.

Information is also changed and shaped by the matrix it is transmitted through. When much of our lives are spent mediated by electronic media, these experiences are presented through the mode by which they are programmed. These media (like all media) are biased towards presenting specific types of information. In the computer's case this seems to be in the form of data, unchallengeable components.

Computers, smart phones, and electronic media shape society and our expectations of how we interact with society. They affect our perspectives and expectations. They form the superstructure of society. This is why even seemingly subversive ideas are so easily recuperated, because they are presented in this context. It becomes impossible for any of us to actually believe in the possibility of overcoming this society.

It is impossible to imagine a coming insurrection when trapped in the coming singularity (the total control of the world by intelligent computers desired by the transhumanists, such as Zoltan Istvan).

In the early 2000s, some of the editors of the now

defunct anarcho-primitivist journal, *Green Anarchy*, went on tour with several bands to promote their magazine. It was reported that the stage banter included statements that this tour might be one of the last aboveground actions of the group, implying that an imminent insurrection was at hand.

Did they actually believe they could wage a successful struggle against civilization? Who would be-

lieve anything so idealistic or naive now? Social war has become a concept for academic discourse now mostly employed by graduate students.

It is not considered an actual struggle that can be waged and won, particularly not by a bunch of lumpen proletarians and intellectual vagabonds.

Even lesser actions are considered absurd now. Twenty years ago or more, one could advocate the elimination of television. Then, and until recently, one could live without TV and encourage others to do the same, as Jerry Mander

does in his still valuable 1978 book, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*.

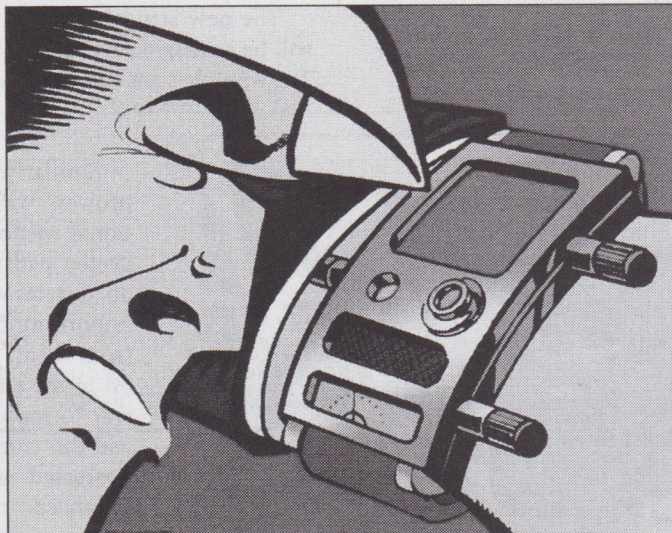
A person who did so then might be considered eccentric, idealistic, or a little weird, but it was still a viable option. Who in this day and age could even imagine living without a computer, living without the internet, living without a cell phone? It is now considered crazy talk; technological society has rendered such abstention impossible.

I bet even Bradford, whose writing in the 1980s offered the first critiques of technology within the anarchist milieu, has a smart phone. The *Fifth Estate* uses a pretty high tech setup to publish its anarchist magazine. I'm not calling them hypocrites, just pointing out the facts of our world, the terms of society. I don't have a smart phone (or any cell phone), use social media, or even have an e-mail address.

Sometimes I just want to say, "I give up," or just yell, "Face it, we lost." There are times when I think the entire anarchist project is done with. Yes, we lost this round; time to face it. The New World Order consolidated its globalized world.

Ziggurats to the computer gods have been erected. The cybernetic society has been perfected, if only we marginalized losers could get over our irrational dissatisfaction with totalitarianism and technocratic society.

However, those are in my worst moments. Maybe now is not the time to give up at all; maybe it is the



Bradford predicted the smart phone. But, acutely aware as he was, he couldn't predict that this "computerized television" would be miniaturized and carried everywhere.

But, Dick Tracy did! The comic strip's creator, Chester Gould, introduced the Apple Watch-like device in 1946

Jason Rodgers publishes Media Junky & Psionic Plastic Joy from PO Box 10894, Albany NY 12201. He does not use computers in their preparation.

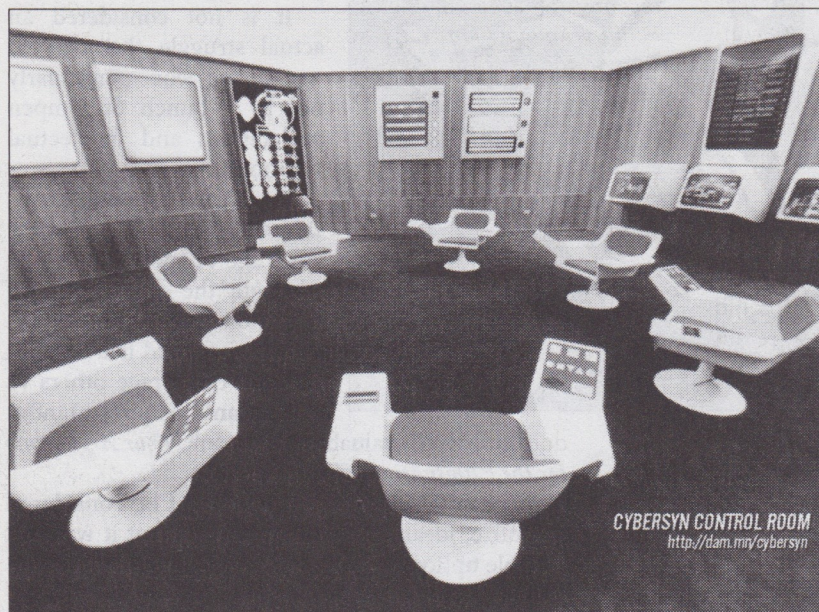
ideal time to mount a resistance. The technocratic NWO relies on the myth of the machine. Maybe it is time to unveil our own myth of uprising! We need to believe in the power of total rejection of all conceptual frameworks that limit our ability to create a world beyond the megamachine.

The more ever-present and expansive a totalitarian system is, the thinner it is spread. The more powerful it is, the more internally reliant it is on all of its segments. If there were a collapse of one part, it would ripple out. Visualize total collapse. Vanguard Maoist parties would be totally unnecessary to combat this totality, and would be undoubtedly counter-productive.

Instead, individual micropolitical interventions could form an open conspiracy. The Frankfurt School's Herbert Marcuse's suggestion of the great refusal still seems applicable to fighting technocracy. The spirit of the Nottingham woods could return in the spirit of Luddism!

King Steam has transformed into a Cybernetic Pharaoh, but the Megamachine is weaker than ever, if only it is looked at directly. It has weak spots everywhere, distributed throughout its system.

The new struggle will be different than previous ones. It will be a struggle against the virtual reality matrix of control. The wrenches are still here, even if they're hard to see. **FE**



Salvador Allende planned to run Chile's state socialism from this room

Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile

Eden Medina

MIT Press, 2014, 344 pp., \$20

IAN ERIK SMITH

Eden Medina's *Cybernetic Revolutionaries* provides an account which is sympathetic to Chile's Project Cybersyn. She uncovers and details the largely forgotten and extraordinarily fascinating history of how information and communication technology was seized upon as a way to realize President Salvador Allende's socialist aspirations.

After his election in 1970, Allende led Chile on what he described as the "Chilean road to socialism" which was to differ from the revolutionary path charted by figures such as Fidel Castro in Cuba. In contrast to the Cuban example, the democratically elected Allende aimed to use already existing institutional channels to peacefully introduce socialist policies to his country. His plan was offered as a third way that did not explicitly align Chile with either of the two superpowers that were waging their Cold War and using smaller countries as pawns.

Similarly, Chile's road to technological prowess was to differ from what conventional wisdom suggested. The generally accepted path forward for small lesser-developed states was to make big friends and then import modern technology and expertise from them. Instead, Allende took an interest in the emerging field of cybernetics as a way to more creatively think about how to use the computer technology they already possessed—which was far from the most advanced—to create systems that even the superpowers could not yet accomplish. They set out to build something akin to a nationwide internet before the existence of the internet.

With the help of eccentric British cybernetician, Stafford Beer, Chile launched Project Cybersyn to create an information network that would make a state controlled economy both feasible and efficient.

Those involved in Project Cybersyn sought a way to capture and manage the flood of information needed to be processed in real-time so that state officials could make informed decisions about how to most efficiently run the economy.

The current obsession with real time information was effectively being pursued in 1970s Chile. State officials would know if production goals were being met, if raw materials were being delivered, if a work stoppage was interrupting their plans, and vast amounts of other such quantifiable data pertaining to the economy. They wanted models predicting how the economy would respond in the future based on current data.

With such information delivered in real time, the state could theoretically be able to shift and adapt so their desired end targets were achieved. Production quotas could be altered, raw materials could be rerouted, dif-

difficult workers could be circumvented, and so on. According to cybernetic theory, the state needed to be as homeostatic and as responsive as a living organism.

The political aspect of the project was highlighted in Allende's intention to solve the dilemma between maintaining a stable state and allowing for personal autonomy. Individuals needed to have the freedom to live as they chose while at the same time not jeopardizing the stability of the state. Beer and his Chilean colleagues believed that cybernetics could ease this tension by creating a more dynamic state that could allow both. Medina's book, however, fails to point out that this, in reality, is a sleight-of-hand trick which allows the individual to do as they wish provided the state can easily neutralize their efforts. One can do anything provided it is without consequence.

Since the Allende government defined its policies as socialism, it was also important to at least pay lip service to the notion of worker participation. The operations room of Project Cybersyn in Santiago was supposed to be accessible to even the uneducated rank-and-file. It included screens but only a few buttons. It included chairs but no tables and no paper.

Information was to be displayed graphically so it could be readily understood and acted upon. Keyboards were out because their presence would have implied secretarial work (and bureaucracy) which in turn implied the presence of women in the operations room which is not how the rank-and-file were generally pictured. Indeed, a gentlemen's club was proposed as one aesthetic model for the design of the operations room. In hindsight, the completed command center has drawn comparisons with the War Room in Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove*.

Yet as novel as Allende's political supporters thought his road to socialism was and as innovative as the cyberneticians considered their system, the message of Medina's book, when read from an antiauthoritarian or anarchist perspective, is that these are but nuances on the organization, development and administration of the industrial system on which a new label was tacked.

Although Allende may have dreamed of a different road or path, his cybernetic industrialism had more in common with Fordism and Taylorism than it did with humanity's emancipation.

The 1973 U.S.-backed coup that ousted Allende from power and installed the Pinochet dictatorship prevented Project Cybersyn from ever being completed. This fact allows supporters of the project to keep their dreams intact as to what might have been if had been free from interference. Even Medina seems to occasionally resist criticism in this fashion. But to advance this line of thought, to defend the project in this way, requires that at least some sympathy for its goals of a highly coordinated industrialism. It may have been wildly successful if it had proceeded unimpeded, but in a process which was fundamentally flawed.

Allende, like Marx, thought that socialism could modern-

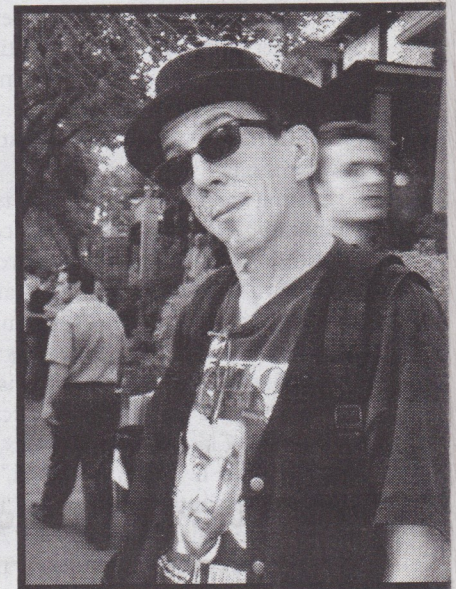
ize and ultimately be more productive than capitalism. But if that is not the desired destination, it is of little consequence which ideology will purportedly get there faster.

Capitalism and socialism are essentially two different strategies both seeking to make mass society possible. There is nothing radical about simply picking one side over the other; rejecting capitalism only to embrace socialism. The project of mass society needs to be rejected outright.

Ian Erik Smith lives in Eugene, Oregon. His academic background is in philosophy and his writing has appeared in *Philosophy Now*, the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, and the recently released volume, *Animals and War: Confronting the Military-Animal Industrial Complex*. He blogs at uncivilizedanimals.wordpress.com.

Linus J. O'Leary 1956 - 2015

The Passing of an Anarchist Prankster



BILL BOYER

Detroit lost a unique anarchist prankster, mechanical genius, underground musician and reluctant sage, Linus J. O'Leary, after a two month battle with multiple complications from a brain aneurysm on February 25, 2015. He was 58.

Linus grew up during the 1960s in a large working class Catholic family (with proud Irish roots) in Dearborn, Michigan, exposing him to one of metro Detroit's most infamous examples of bitter segregation, while developing a radical political consciousness against racial injustice and other forms of oppression.

In 1982, a family tragedy profoundly affected him for the rest of his life with the death of one of his activist sisters, who died in a freak New York City high-rise elevator acci-

dent while canvassing for a communist party. Such hardship strengthened both his commitment to more anarchist activism and his awareness (bordering on paranoia, according to some) on how dangerous such dedication can sometimes be.

While always a familiar face at anti-war and anarchist demonstrations, Linus also entertained more covert actions of political expression and misdemeanor vandalism such as graffiti on billboards or unlicensed use of a certain class of fireworks.

His inventive touches frequently enhanced the local protest scene. Once, he created a deafening explosion simply by attaching a fifty foot extension cord to a TV hurled from the roof of an apartment building while it was blaring the spectacle of the 11:00 News).

His mere presence also often aroused interest from law enforcement, including an arrest at an anti-OAS demonstration for wearing a baseball helmet (humorously documented in a syndicated cartoon) and a gun-drawing, stop-and-frisk by Detroit police after pulling over Linus seated on a bus due to another rider mistakenly identifying his cigarette roller for a loaded handgun. At a protest in Atlanta against former US Secretary of State (and war criminal) Henry Kissinger, Linus rather daringly vented his disgust with some well-aimed spit at close range.

During the peak years of activism against the Detroit trash incinerator (1986-1991), Linus could be heard in marches banging on varied make-shift percussion instruments or seen in creative costumes, including an elaborate smokestack assembly belching actual fire and smoke. The festive contraption unexpectedly almost engulfed his wavy reddish brown mane. Undaunted, he marched on with his characteristic hearty giggle.

A passionate punk rock musician and fan since the early days of The Clash and Sex Pistols, Linus wrote several songs, including two favorites, "Fireball," defiling the ill-fated Challenger space-shuttle crash, and "Tylenol Kills," satirizing the fatally contaminated pain-killer. As lead singer for a year in a Detroit alternative rock band, The Blanks, his vocal fervor remains preserved on one topical recording against the Detroit incinerator, "Where There's Smoke."

His short-lived band career evolved into two decades of sound engineering live shows, most frequently at the Old Miami, a bar whose clientele is an admixture of vets and punks, in the heart of Detroit's fabled Cass Corridor.

His unusual combination of mechanical expertise and a heartwarming generosity also made Linus a common community repairman, dispensing friendly advice while salvaging car engines, appliances and assorted electronics, usually in trade for just a warm meal and a beer (ok, maybe several).

Although Linus could count at least 18 different addresses over the past 30 years, including stints in New Orleans and Naples, Florida, he never strayed from Detroit for too long. A longtime "spiritual atheist," he nonetheless took residence for a few years as live-in caretaker of the leftist Central United Methodist Church.

At the height of the Occupy movement in 2011, he spent

many days distributing food, *Fifth Estate* magazines, and timely wisdom to the busy Detroit encampment.

The now ethnically diverse city of Dearborn became his final residence in 2013. Neighborhood youth sought him frequently for childish fun and informal advice, yet Linus, without any partner or children, dreaded growing old, grumpy and alone. He dabbled in various social media but understandably found such connections trite, even staging a mock suicide by slowly deactivating his Facebook account so friends could say goodbye.

Solitary probes into the world of Anonymous and other cyber-activist sites seemed to coincide with his slowly fading health, a shadow of someone who once biked some 250 miles from Detroit to Sleeping Bear Dunes on Lake Michigan with one of his ankles in a cast, with crutches artfully attached to his bike.

His reclusive later years and premature death leaves behind many disturbing questions, such as what happens to aging activists without sustainable associations to any community, organization or meaningful work, nor any partner, children or close family ties. Unconsciously, his varied services seemed to be no longer needed, even his quiet hobby of copying bootleg CD and DVD copies for friends and relatives.

Most of us had moved on with our own shrinking families in faster, digital domains of typically less personalized and less unified action. Linus had openly insisted on no resuscitation in case of intensive hospitalization, yet he suffered miserably during his final two months, mumbling repeatedly about wanting to go home while shackled to a bed with cloth restraints, psychotropic cocktails and the intravenous technology too common in such institutions of managed death.

This heartbreak gives a surviving best friend a kind of permanent pause; a mourning endless in memory, not just of an idealist or anachronism, but of a close companion with too much soul and too few connections to these troubling times.

Bill Boyer teaches high school in the Detroit area.

Also, see corridortribe.com/obits/linus_oleary.htm

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Judith Malina, Co-founder of The Living Theatre

1926-2015

Combining anarchism and pacifism on stage & in her life

LORRAINE PERLMAN



Judith Malina in The Living Theatre's production of *The Brig*, 1964

Conversations with Judith Malina rarely ended without her advocating “the beautiful nonviolent anarchist revolution.” Strategy to realize it always followed. Her efforts to achieve this ideal resulted in her arrest for civil disobedience in twelve different countries.

She and her husband Julian Beck established The Living Theatre in New York City in 1947 when they were in their 20s. Cultural foundations offering support were non-existent. Despite the constant shortage of physical space to rehearse and perform, they produced plays by radical playwrights like William Carlos Williams, Antonin Artaud, Paul Goodman and Tennessee Williams.

Catholic Worker pacifists like Dorothy Day and anarchists like Goodman greatly influenced both Judith and Julian. Their half-century of committed activism still serves as a model.

Judith's first public protest was directed against nuclear weapons. In June 1955, at a Lower East Side NYC park, she was one of ten who refused to take shelter when sirens required everyone to do so. A decade later, this tiny public rejection had expanded to millions marching against atomic bomb production and testing.

Judith was a vegetarian. Animal Liberation was not a goal she focused on, but you did not feel comfortable eating meat in her presence.

Nineteenth century anarchism provided theory for The Living Theatre's call for a General Strike for Peace in 1962. When police on horses stormed the protesters/strikers in Times Square, Julian's ribs were broken and his lung punctured.

In 1963, after federal tax enforcers blocked the doors of their 14th Street theater and Judith and Julian were tried and found guilty of seven counts of felony, the Living Theatre company regrouped in Europe. Their politics and their art were welcomed. At least, at first. As the 1968-9 uprisings sweeping the continent disturbed the forces of order, police repression extended to the theaters. Administrators cancelled contracts. Governments deported the actors.

“Paradise Now,” the Living Theatre's signature work, evolved during these tumultuous years. Julian and Judith later wrote down the outline and crucial elements of the play. To start, “The voyage is a vertical ascent toward Permanent Revolution.” The first spoken words are “I am not allowed to travel without a passport.” Indignation ignites determination to loosen social restraints, leading to unity of actors and audience who leave the theater in order to publicly liberate themselves.

Back in the United States in August 1968, the Living Theatre presented this richly nuanced work from coast to coast. They adapted it

Painting Flowers on the Sidewalk: Tompkins Square

When the clubs came down on Tompkins Square,
I remembered the Times Square Police Riot
At the start of the '60s,
And how Julian cried “Shame!”
As they rode in on horses,
Till they broke his ribs...

Not one of those Tompkins Square cops
Is old enough to remember
The police riding in on horses, swinging.
But I remember how, when it struck my head,
I saw red splash, I thought: “Roses!”
Roses shattering into full bloom.

Wherever you've been hit
Paint a flower on the sidewalk,
Because there the seed of your blood
Has been planted in the asphalt,
And there the seed of your blood
Will blossom and burst through the stones.

Then the streets
Will be covered
With flowers
And the police...

What police?

-from a collection of Judith Malina's poems, *Love & Politics*, published in 2001 by Black & Red, Detroit. Available at blackandred.org.

to the local setting and social protests.

Judith became a Wobbly in the 1970s. Several of us from Detroit went to Pittsburgh to see them and the

opening of the "Legacy of Cain." It was performed on a large outdoor structure of several stories. On the mimeographed program (enhanced with the IWW logo) the Preamble announces, "We propose to visit six places where the power of Cain is felt and to enact there public acts in the name of the people's pain."

Among the questions dealing with the House of Death: "Who were Cain and Abel and why did one kill the other? What was the result?"

In the House of the State, we are asked: "What is government? What is patriarchy?" In the House of Money, "What's the Golden Calf? Who bows down? Who refuses? Is money violent?"

In the House of Property: "What is property? Is it violent? Who owns your labor? In the House of War: "Who dies for what? What is cruelty? What is sadism? What are the choices?"

Finally in Act 6, we reach The House of Love: "What is the source? How did it begin? Who dominates? Who submits? Am I your slave? Who ties up whom? Who cracks the whip? How can we undo the knots?" (Note that Cain's power is not absent from the House of Love.)

Julian died in 1985. Judith kept The Living Theatre alive helped by the love and commitment of Hanon Reznikov, a long-time member of the collective. Physical space was still a problem, but rehearsals continued in lofts and finally, in 2000, a potentially permanent home was secured on Clinton St., on New York City's lower east side.

Living her principles did not make life easy. Money was always a problem. When the company traveled, housing and

food had to be procured. She and Julian had two children. Roles in commercial films such as appearances in "The Sopranos" or "Dog Day Afternoon," or in theater productions brought occasional economic relief. So, Judith's response to a provocative stage hand on a California movie set had implications for their budget.

The exchange took place as the first Gulf War was warming up. As the cameras were about to roll, Judith, on stage with Anjelica Huston, was handed a small American flag. Judith said she panicked. Her response: "Don't give me that without giving me a match to go with it." She was not hired for the sequel to this Addams Family film.

On one of my visits to New York to discuss Black & Red's publication of Judith's poems (*Love & Politics* appeared in 2001), I was pleased to join The Living Theatre and friends at a Times Square protest-theater against an impending execution. "Not in My Name," expressed our grief and outrage at murder by state decree.

Judith and her collaborators studied and practiced freedom. One of the numerous mantras heard in their *Paradise Now* play has a unique intensity for me:

to be free
is to be free
to change

Lorraine Perlman lives in the Detroit area where she publishes and distributes Black & Red titles including Judith Malina's book of poetry. She and her husband, Fredy, cooperated in political actions with the Living Theatre in the early 1960s.

Romantic love so often doesn't work because it isn't rooted in human traditions.

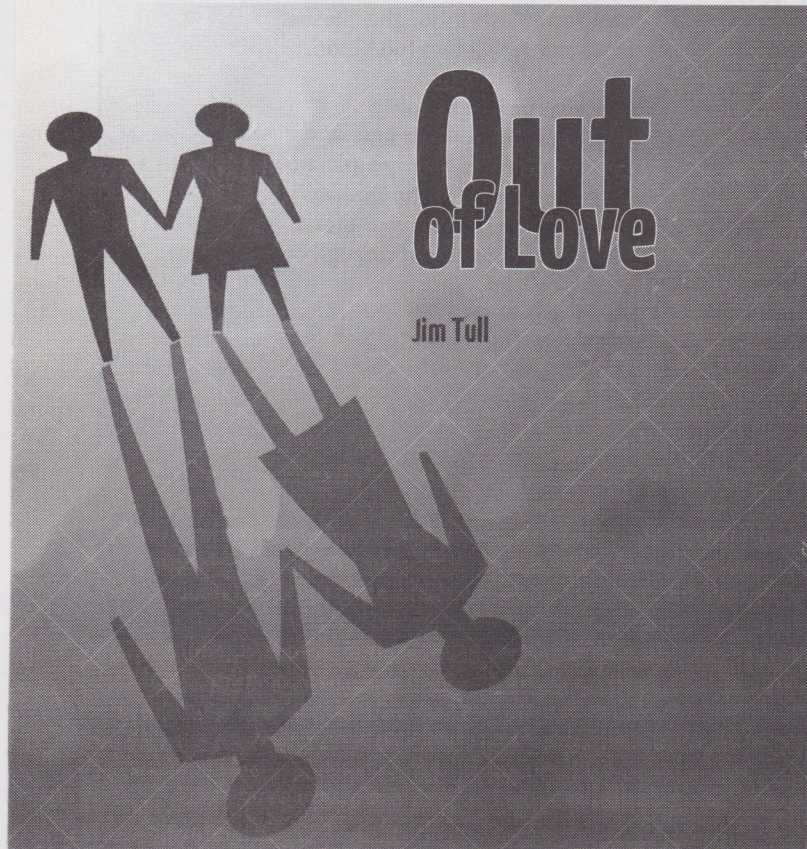
In the long course of our culture's evolution, romantic love has become the primary post-pubescent source of affection in our world. But it has not always occupied this special position.

It may be a universal in human experience, but in our globalizing monoculture, romance has intensified over the millennia into a distorted caricature of versions common in tribal and Neolithic village societies.

Romantic love offers an acutely intensified form of love, a delicacy extracted from sources that are much less intense, but, over time, more deeply and evenly satisfying.

Two of these sources are a) community and b) nature, inadequate labels meaning, very roughly: a) a small group of trustworthy individuals/families whose interdependent, face-to-face personal support is the basis of their survival; and b) the features of the group's local environment that are not man-made.

Our contemporary definitions no longer recognize these very bland-seeming sources of love, but if we re-



ally want to feel held, safe, loved, there may be no substitute.

Judging, at the very least, from the recent track record of our nuclear families and binary love relationships, it should be clear that two is not enough. We are constantly being told, mostly indirectly, that two should be sufficient, that one or both of you are the problem if the two of you are not working out.

For humans, we should be learning by now that two doesn't work. To claim that people are meant to live in tribe-like communities or that community living can't be brutal and ugly is neither useful nor true. And, it is also the case that marriage (mono- and polygamous, hetero- and homosexual, serial and life-lasting) and household units have been common features of tribal and small village life.

But the basic form of social organization of the tribe and small village, within which marital households are sustained and nested, is a form that worked, to get the love as well as the food they require over the course of human evolution and has prevailed as the way of life for 99 percent of that history. Community life works for people in the same way that pack life works for wolves.

As a very basic form it provides a basis, a necessary condition, for living well, including getting the love we need, delivered in the form of care and devotion, sustained and reliable.

At least two particular features of traditional tribal and village life are noteworthy as powerful sources of love in these communities. The first is culture, distinct and local, which guides the thinking and behavior of people living in traditional communities. Culture also provides meaning. The guidance and meaning culture provides constitute an indirect source of love for its members growing into the world they inhabit.

The modern, especially urban child is exposed to cultural variety, but also cultural confusion and contention. We are lost and anxious in the stew of the mixed messages we receive from the Big (global, nontraditional) Culture and the remnants of its assimilated subcultures.

The second feature common among traditional societies is an infant care practice that essentially inoculates children with a starter dose of love in the first months of life. Slipped from the womb directly into the warm hands of community members, newborns are virtually never let go by these hands and warm bodies until they push away several months later, ready for the independence of crawling and toddling.

The initial in-arms phase is associated with on-demand breastfeeding, which continues through the child's first few years, again, until the child stops coming around altogether. The love and knowledge stored up in these early months and years makes for an older child and adult who is confident and secure, loved and secure in love.

The love we derive from the land, directly and indirectly through the network of community relationships, is less obvi-

ous, but only because it is obscured by the profound alienation from the earth that has accompanied life in the modern world. A serious consequence of this alienation has been a silent, but deeply profound loss of reverence, and gratitude.

We cannot give thanks for gifts we can't see or recognize. We all know what Mother Earth means on some level. The sun and the earth, very especially the small patch of the earth that traditionally each tribe and village intimately knew, worshipped and relied on for survival, are the ultimate sources of love, of care and devotion. They provide and keep providing, from cradle to grave.

Romantic attraction, to the extent that it is an embellishment of sexual attraction, is probably universal in human experience. However, in the course of our civilization's development we have accentuated romantic love to reinforce a host of other forces in our culture that pry the individual from the community.

On one hand, the operating system of our culture, globalization, compels it to absorb the many diverse cultures of the world into a formal unity, but under the sign of a heartless market. On the other, within its globalizing mass, the culture relentlessly separates its members from each other starting at birth and fragments much of our lives, what we think and what we do.

Romantic love achieves exaggerated prominence as a cultural tool to isolate pairs from the group, reinforcing the rugged individualism valued by our culture. Bad endings in love are culturally supported for the same purpose. The isolated pair becomes two separate and more isolated as individuals. The economy of our culture feasts on love-needy, separated individuals. Consumerism feeds on lost love and the loss of the personal and material support provided by communities and land bases.

In this dark age of failing love, people are resorting to a variety of ways to fill the void, beyond increasingly desperate attempts at romantic relationships. Sex, very noticeably, has been distilled from love of any sort. Addiction and compulsion in general, so widespread and intense in our society, may be functions of love lost, at least in part.

And, there are the countless, more subtle ways we compensate. There is a rebound quality to all of our love affairs, as well as to the various substitutes. With every romantic attraction, fulfilled and unfulfilled, we are rebounding from a break-up, from our broken relationship with the caregivers of the community and the natural environment that for most of us have grown distant well beyond memory.

Without the love we need, we hurt. We hurt others. We internalize the hurt and hurt ourselves. We're becoming a society of junkies, in the grip of cultural forces, collective patterns of thinking and acting, that we did not design or ever consciously endorse. We sustain these forces, however, through the unconscious sponsorship of our minds, every day.

Continued on P.38

**Without the love we need, we hurt.
We hurt others. We internalize the
hurt and hurt ourselves. We're in
the grip of cultural forces, collective
patterns of thinking and acting,
that we did not design or ever
consciously endorse.**



The famous "Che Building" on Havana's Revolution Square is enough to make a Marxist's heart flutter. The familiar caricature, his famous slogan, *Hasta La Victoria Siempre*, but what they ignore is that the structure is the headquarters for the Ministry of the Interior and houses its dreaded secret police. —photo: Peter Werbe

Anarchists Confront the Marxist State in Cuba

Whee! Airbnb announces 2000 available Cuban listings; The New York Times has full page ads for travel to the island. Isn't it all grand? Well, no.

QUINCY B. THORN

The recent loosening of restrictions on economic transactions between citizens and companies in the U.S. and those in Cuba has been greeted by many liberals and leftists as a promise of what they designate as "prosperity" for the island.

They are hopeful that Congress will eliminate remaining trade restrictions, thereby helping to promote economic growth. However, given past examples of such liberalization, we can only realistically expect it to promote further integration of the Cuban economy into global capitalism.

Since shortly after taking power, the Castro regime has fairly systematically repressed anarchist activity. However, beginning in 2010, anarchist-inspired public activities have re-emerged in Cuba.

The Alfredo Lopez Libertarian Workshop (*Taller Libertario Alfredo Lopez*) has brought anarchists together, providing a meeting place for dialogue, mutual learning, rescuing hidden and forgotten histories, and coordination of public activities. (See the site observatoriocriticocuba.org for details.) This

Like all Marxist police states, the Castro government repressed the anarchist movement fearing its independence & strength in the Cuban working class

year, the Workshop, along with other organizations, sponsored a second Havana Libertarian Spring to commemorate the Haymarket martyrs and Cuban anarchists of the 20th century.

Since the 19th century, anarchists have continually faced repression, not only by traditional defenders of the capitalist order—employers, police, military and other government authorities—but also those forces posing as alternatives to the old world. Whether in power or aspiring to it, actors of the authoritarian left, from Marx on, have done everything they could to crush the possibilities and ideals of liberation ardently pursued by anarchists.

The regime established in Cuba in 1959 has not deviated from this tradition. The prevailing mystique surrounding the Castro brothers, Che Guevara and the guerrillas who fought in the mountains against a U.S.-supported right-wing dictatorship in the 1950s has obscured the importance of the country's anarchist struggles. But it isn't too late to explore and retell some of that story.

As in other parts of Latin America, anarchist movements in Cuba began in the mid-19th century,

Continued on Page 44



Looking Back on the Vietnam War

The war's legacy of lies continues in an official commemoration that stands history on its head.

2015 marks the third year of a fifteen year, congressionally designated commemoration of the U.S. empire's monstrous war in Vietnam.

It is also the fortieth anniversary of the final defeat and withdrawal of U.S. military forces.

The enormity of the U.S. aggression against a small country 8,000 miles away is masked behind a well orchestrated campaign to maintain the legitimacy of American militarism and ignore the horrible destruction the U.S. war machine inflicted on the nations of Indochina.

This is accomplished through a sleight of hand which turns who is victim and who is perpetrator on its head. Seen through the imperial gaze, the Vietnam war is portrayed as a failed and flawed undertaking, but with a pathos projected for "our boys" who fought honorably and are still suffering the consequences of the experience through PTSD and homelessness. But ignores what was suffered by the Vietnamese.

Most Americans can quickly offer the official U.S. military death toll for the war, but if you rudely ask how many perished on the other side, one is usually

A special section of essays which bring light to the Vietnam War's continuing mystification

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met with a blank stare. Guesses usually range in the hundreds of thousands, a thought-less estimate that is far from the actual number that reaches upwards of three million. Try it on a friend or family member.

Noam Chomsky wrote that this figure would be like asking a German citizen how many people were put to death in the Nazi Holocaust and hearing an answer that was 90 percent less than the actual total.

The Vietnamese resistance that fought and beat the Japanese and French colonial regimes must have seemed Lilliputian to the U.S. war machine, but the new invaders suffered as ignoble a defeat as their predecessors. Following the exit from Saigon 40 years ago, the challenge confronting the war makers, driven equally by a psychosis of power and the need to maintain a military-based economy, was how to resuscitate popular support for the empire's endless wars.

Quick, cheap victories (except to those who were in the way) in Grenada, Panama, and the first Persian Gulf War were expected to erase what the militarists dubbed the Vietnam Syndrome, the public distaste for overseas adventures. Those projections of American power in the 1980s and '90s, combined with the events of September 11, 2001, set the stage

for popular support for two new wars, both of which are now seen universally as military and policy disasters. But as with Vietnam, they are seen as disasters for the invaders, not for the countries they destroyed.

That each of these wars, like every conflict the U.S. has been involved in, was based on lies is lost on most Americans. Many will offer obeisance to the dominant narrative as expressed in the five Congressionally-mandated objectives of the 15 year observance since that is the only one most will hear.

To no one's surprise, liberal networks such as PBS and NPR (best designated as Pentagon Bull Shit and National Pentagon Radio) echo the militarist tropes no less so than the mainstream networks and cable outlets.

The five official points of commemoration are 1) To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War; 2) To highlight the service of the Armed Forces and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations; 3) To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States; 4) To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War; and,

5) To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

This stupefying, blinkered laundry list of acts considered worthy of honors, if examined even with the slightest honesty, is more easily recognized as the template for the military machine that killed millions of Indochinese and destroyed a society. Yes, babies were killed.

What has been transmuted from the horrors perpetrated into props for militarism and nationalism, calls out mightily for their refutation. We offer this section as what is hopefully a large body of literature and actions that will function as the counter-narrative to the official lies.

The U.S. is often described as a dying empire, but even a dying dragon can still wreak destruction with swipes of its tail. We, too, are Lilliputian compared to the dominance of the rulers which control the major means of communication, but like the Vietnamese who cut the legs off the great beast, we go at our task with similar resolve to hobble the dragon.

We dedicate this section to those who took part in the resistance to U.S.'s bloody slaughter: the Vietnamese, anti-war GIs, and the domestic anti-war movement.



The Vietnam War History & Forgetting

by David Watson

INTRODUCTION

When this essay first appeared in the *Fifth Estate* in Spring 1985, the Vietnam War already seemed to be receding into ancient history. Central America was at that time being battered with money and proxies, rather than with "American boys," who tend to get themselves unceremoniously killed while smashing up other people's neighborhoods. A few hundred thousand deaths and mutilations later, we still await the tearful retrospectives with their admixture of regret and denial.

The Vietnamese remain largely invisible to Americans. The war criminals continue to expire peacefully in their beds (Nixon), pontificate in televised policy debates (Kissinger), and cash in on their memoirs (McNamara). The "Vietnam syndrome," declared defunct by a triumphant George Bush after his "turkey

shoot" in the first Persian Gulf war, guarantees continued slaughter so long as it is not too costly to North Americans. Complacent amid its bloodbaths, the thoroughly Nazified society described by Noam Chomsky in the mid-1960s remains intact.

Some differences are also worth noting. The response to the war twenty years later, if a *Time* magazine retrospective is any indication, had a more muted, almost postmodern uncertainty to it. The editors assure the reader psalmodically, "Vietnam may be the war that passeth all understanding," and one *Time* essayist, declaring all conflicts unique, concludes that the war offers no lessons, "no guide to the future."

Essentially a new spin on an old canard, this uncritical line repeats the persistent myth, common both inside and outside the antiwar movement of the day, that the war was a terrible mistake, a tragedy. Certainly, the war was a tragedy of unforeseen consequences. U.S. objectives were murky even to the generals. But this now dominant interpretation serves in its vagueness to dissipate responsibility and the possibility of a coherent historical critique.

Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's argument that the war did not originate in evil intentions, but in a failure "of judgment and capability," is only the latest reiteration of the official story. It conceals the fact that the U.S. created a war where one had just been concluded, and concocted a regime out of a quisling apparatus, property of the Japanese and then French, that had justly collapsed. The "Murder, Inc." the CIA and Pentagon ran in that unhappy region for more than two decades was, in reality, only one arm of a vast operation constructed to overthrow and reconstitute states and decimate human beings at will all over the globe, not only in Indochina but in Iran, Guatemala, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, and Chile, to name some of the more infamous examples.

The novelist Tobias Wolff illustrates the deep gulf still dividing Americans on Vietnam by describing a discussion group of vets, former antiwar activists and other Vietnam generation men which eventually disbanded because of an inability to find common ground. I, too, was keenly reminded of how deep the divisions are, upon reading, "Only the most self-satisfied ideologues on either side of the problem could avoid questioning their own motives" for fighting the war or resisting it.

Those who protested, Wolff explains, might reasonably worry that, "however unintentionally, . . . [they] were encouraging a hard, often murderous enemy who was doing his best to kill boys you'd grown up with."

Perhaps the novelist doesn't realize his attempted middle ground is itself an ideologue's argument. He doesn't seem to appreciate the impact our witness of the war had on many young people here—the images of

ABOUT THIS ESSAY

This essay originally appeared in a longer version in the Spring 1985 *Fifth Estate* under the pen-name George Bradford. It was reprinted ten years later on the 20th anniversary of the defeat of the U.S. empire in Vietnam in our Summer 1995 issue with an introduction by the late historian, Richard Drinnon. It is available in its entirety in our Archive at fifthestate.org.

Many of the illustrations in the first two printings depicted U.S. atrocities and war crimes. They do not appear in this version.

torture and massive bombing raids, of a mother holding her burned infant and a swaggering soldier nonchalantly torching her household with his cigarette lighter.

What were those American boys I'd grown up with doing there, after all, collaborating with the death machine? I knew they were in most cases victims themselves—of propaganda, of poverty, of the draft. I actively participated in campaigns to support the Vietnam Veterans Against the War and to defend GI rights and resisters in the military, sending antiwar information to soldiers and sailors, including to my own brother. Knowing what I did about those American boys didn't stop me from desiring the defeat of U.S. forces as fervently as I would have had I been an anti-Nazi German during the Second World War.

Enough people also resolved to neither be nor to tolerate aggressors in that period for there to be widespread, organized resistance during the late 1970s and 1980s to the U.S.-administered holocaust throughout Central America. True, the resistance wasn't enough to halt the war machine there or in Iraq, but it at least obstructed the murderers in their work and preserved fragile memory in the face of official lies.

That was what the essay below is about: remembering what is in the interest of the empire to suppress. The country as a whole continues to sleepwalk through one imperial fiasco to the next, smashing people and places at every turn. But some people are capable of hearing what the essay tries to say: that conscience, even if reduced to a single voice, to a "minority of one," perhaps, can at least bear witness to lies and speak the truth. As Frances Fitzgerald, who powerfully chronicled the Vietnam conflict, observed a decade after the war, "The past is not just a matter for historians. It is what we are."

And so, who are we going to be? Those who follow orders, and those who give them, have decided who they are.

That was what the essay below is about: remembering what is in the interest of the empire to suppress. The country as a whole continues to sleepwalk through one imperial fiasco to the next, smashing people and places at every turn.

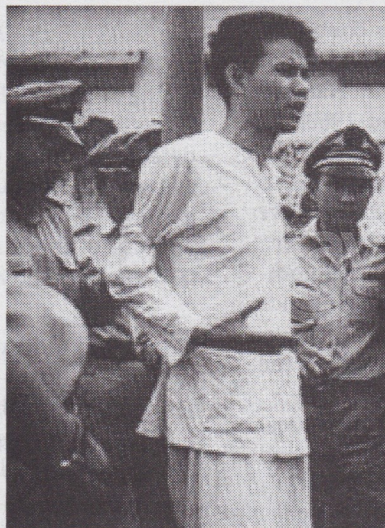
McNamara decided. When the war failed to go according to plan, he jumped ship to a comfortable position at the head of the World Bank.

And if and when the real toll is added up, it may turn out that he caused as much mayhem and destruction managing the daily affairs of that institution as when he and his cohorts were in the daily business of mechanized genocide.

McNamara's memoirs published in 1995 reminded me of another protagonist of the war, an obscure hero of mine whose image on a poster remained taped to my wall for a number of years.

Nguyen Van Troi won't have the opportunity to write his memoirs. The young Vietnamese worker was executed by firing squad on October 15, 1964 for attempting to assassinate the Secretary of Defense in Saigon.

Of course, if he had succeeded, another Secretary, and another would have followed, just as others



Nguyen Van Troi at his execution for attempted assassination in 1964 of U.S. Sec't of Defense, Robert McNamara

would have replaced Adolph Eichman had partisans managed to assassinate the Nazi genocide technocrat. That is not the point, but rather, who and what we remember, and who and what we are and are going to be.

Thus, in the spirit of "giving aid and comfort" to the enemies of all imperial states, I dedicate this essay to the memory of a defiant young patriot who refused a blindfold at the execution post so he could look one last time on his "beloved land," who risked his life "to be of help," who was a naive nationalist, surely, perhaps a poet, and who did not live to look back with regrets, contrived or otherwise, on "an era that is not over."

I dedicate it to the idealists and against the conspirators and functionaries of genocide, to conscience and against collaboration, to memory and against forgetting.

For history isn't just a matter for the rationalizations of mass murderers, history is what we are and must be. It is our history, too.

We are Nguyen Van Troi.

Looking Back on the Vietnam War

"Without the exposure of these Vietnam policies as criminal, there is every likelihood of their repetition in subsequent conflicts."

—Richard Falk, speaking at the Congressional Conference on War and National Responsibility, convened in Washington, D.C. in early 1970

"Historical memory was never the forte of Americans in Vietnam."

—Frances Fitzgerald, *The Fire in The Lake*, 1972

AN ORWELLIAN WAR

There was no Nuremberg trial after the U.S. defeat in Indochina; no court ever punished the administrators of the American war—Nixon, Kissinger, Johnson, McNamara, Rusk, and the rest—for their crimes. They either died peacefully in their beds or went on to more lucrative jobs in the same line of work.

Now, they extol their "noble cause" and hint of treachery and betrayal. Now, they say they could have, indeed should have won. Perhaps they didn't unleash enough bombs, declare enough "free fire zones," defoliate enough lands. Perhaps not enough people were rounded up into concentration camps, their thatch villages burned and bulldozed. Perhaps

not enough were incinerated by napalm and phosphorous (mobile Dachaus), not enough machine-gunned and bulldozed into open ditches, not enough of their defeated converted into prostitutes, lackeys, mercenaries.

If America had spent more money, sent more troops, embraced a more ferocious national spirit, and ignored its own wounds, if it had been ready to risk everything in a deadly gamble to destroy all of Asia "in order to save it," then perhaps America could have "won" its war. A few million more would have been sacrificed.

And, in fact, countless more did die in the aftermath: See how evil, how savage they are, America says through its propagandists; after our bloodbath ended, they undertook their own. Surely, ours was inadequate—we could have pacified more, neutralized more, killed more.

AMERICA LICKS ITS WOUNDS

America has never confronted Vietnam or its role there. It has licked its wounds, engaged in recriminations without taking either its own history or the Indochinese people into account. They were simply "natives," a hostile landscape before which the American crusaders fought their war against the Wilderness. This war has gone on since the origins of America, and so it has never envisioned that inscrutable Other on

any terms but those of its own distorted projections.

For America, the war was a tragedy, we are told. But to be a tragedy, it would have had to be an extraordinary transgression of a normal balance in the world. It would also have had to bring proportionally extraordinary suffering on the transgressors. Yet in these terms, it isn't Vietnam which was the tragedy, but America itself, and Vietnam only one more episode in its bloodletting. Of course, it was a moral tragedy for the Americans involved. But that is not how many see it.

One veteran officer, William Broyles, Jr., in *The Atlantic Monthly*, writes, "For us, the war never really ended, not for the men who fought it, not for America." A symposium in *Harper's* magazine makes one of its central inquiries, "Vietnam stands for America's loss of innocence. How have Americans endured this loss?" *Newsweek* asks "What did Vietnam do to us?" before asking "What did America's involvement in the war do to Vietnam?" And, a wounded vet tells a *New York Times Magazine* writer that "whatever happened to us there is inexplicable, but what it did for us as men is worth the price."

It is partly my purpose to assess the price of the war, but not so much to the American soldiers, who were both victims and perpetrators, but to the real victims and heroes of that war—the Indochinese people who resisted American aggression. But to do so, it is imperative to demolish the Big Lie which begins from the lie of American innocence and proceeds to such dishonest formulations as "America's involvement in" a war which was America's creation.

The difficulty in writing about Vietnam must be obvious, since every word is charged; even the most seemingly innocuous statement about the war is permeated with this lie of American innocence and misguided nobility.

The truth is harder to face for America, but it is there. "Just about every Vietnam vet hated the Vietnamese," one told Joseph Lelyveld of the *New York Times Magazine*. A young U.S. embassy officer in Saigon, during the war, exploded at Frances Fitzgerald, "Don't you realize that everything the Americans do in Vietnam is founded on hatred of the Vietnamese?"

The suffering of the American soldiers should not, and cannot be ignored. They, too, were victims, pawns of the policy-makers who blithely sent them to their brutalization and death while themselves living comfortably in suburban luxury, spending their time analyzing body counts and writing policy statements.

But decency requires that a sense of proportion to the suffering be maintained. The soldiers were an occupation army engaged in a vicious,

genocidal war against a whole population. The enemy was, quite simply, the Vietnamese people; indeed, it was the land itself, a "godforsaken mudhole," as I heard many people, both for and against the war, describe it. So, what did it mean to burn villages, run down peasants in tanks and trucks, shoot anything that moved?

"A SHOOTING GALLERY"

The U.S. war against Vietnam was no loss of innocence, no aberration, any more than the massacre at My Lai was exceptional. My Lai will be remembered as the subhamlet in the Quang Ngai province in which a company from the 11th Brigade of the Americal Division murdered 347 old men, women, children and infants, then systematically burned the homes and huts. This happened in early 1968, but was covered up until late 1969. As the My Lai events were the logical outcome (and only the most notorious of such massacres) of U.S. policy, the war itself was the inevitable outcome of America's history. Could this outcome have been anything but a series of brutal pogroms such as My Lai?

Even the official Pentagon report revealed that My Lai was not extraordinary. In his penetrating study of the continuity of massacre and conquest in American history, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*, the late historian Richard Drinnon writes, "On the very same day of the butchery there, another company from the same task force entered the sister subhamlet My Khe 4 with one of its machine-gunners 'firing his weapon from the hip, cowboy-movie style.' In this 'other massacre,' members of this separate company piled up a body count of perhaps a hundred peasants—My Khe was smaller than My Lai—'just flattened that village' by dynamite and fire, and then threw a few handfuls of straw on the corpses. The next morning this company moved on down the Batangan peninsula by the South China Sea, burning every hamlet they came to, killing water buffalo, pigs, chickens, and ducks, and destroying crops. As one of the My Khe veterans said later 'what we were doing was being done all over.' Said another: 'We were out there having a good time. It was sort of like being in a shooting gallery.'"

None of this came out until writer Seymour Hersch obtained the forty or so volumes of the Pentagon report and summarized them in *Cover-Up*



Resource site
for information,
actions, & events
to counter the
official
commemoration.
vietnamfulldisclosure.org

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(1972), the source of Drinnon's quotations. No one was tried for murder at My Khe.

Yet even these massacres do not convey the reality of the war. In hearings held by anti-war Congressmen in Washington, D.C. in 1970, journalist Jonathan Schell testified that in 1967 he had spent a month in that same province of Quang Ngai surveying the damage of the war from the air and on the ground.

"When I first looked down from the plane over Quang Ngai province," he reported, "I saw that the land below me had been completely devastated. . . What I discovered was that by the end of 1967, the destruction of society in Quang Ngai province was not something we were in danger of doing; it was a process we had almost completed. About 70 percent of the villages in the province had been destroyed."

In the same hearings, historian Richard Falk discussed the My Lai massacre, observing that "long before these disclosures there was abundant evidence that the United States was committing war crimes in Vietnam on a widespread and continuing basis."

But far more serious than these atrocities alone, he added, was "the official reliance by the United States Government on a set of battlefield policies that openly deny the significance of any distinction between civilians and combatants, between military and non-military targets."

The most spectacular of these practices are the B-52 pattern raids against undefended villages and populated areas, 'free-fire zones,' 'harassment and interdiction fire,' 'Operation Phoenix,' 'search and destroy' missions, massive crop destruction and defoliation, and forcible transfer of the civilian population in Vietnam from one place to another against their will . . . In fact, the wrongdoers at My Lai, whether or not they were carrying out specific command decisions, were indeed fulfilling the basic and persistent United States war policies in South Vietnam."

American policy was one of wanton, utter annihilation of the defiant land it faced. As U.S. Secretary of the Navy Paul Nitze said in 1965, "Where neither United States nor [South] Vietnamese forces can maintain continuous occupancy, it is necessary to destroy those facilities." And, surveying the destruction of Ben Tre during the Tet Offensive in 1968, an army officer told an AP reporter, "We had to destroy it to save it."

INDIAN FIGHTERS

Such a statement reflects what salvation has always meant for these grim crusaders: a desolation. American historian William Appleman Williams has written that for U.S. policy-makers, "America was the

locomotive puffing away to pull the rest of the world into civilization. Truman talked about the hordes of Asians—the wilderness—threatening to overwhelm civilization. . . Those images and metaphors. . . tell us most of what we need to know about why we went to kill people in Vietnam. We were transforming the Wilderness in order to save the City on a Hill."

"I felt superior there," said Lieutenant William Calley, who led the massacre at My Lai. "I thought, I'm the big American from across the sea. I'll sock it to these people here. . . We weren't in My Lai to kill human beings, really. We were there to kill ideology that is carried by—I don't know. Pawns. Blobs. Pieces of flesh, and I wasn't in My Lai to destroy intelligent men. I was there to destroy an intangible idea."

Richard Drinnon quotes another My Lai veteran who "equated 'wiping the whole place out' with what he called 'the Indian idea. . . the only good gook is a dead gook.' The Indian idea was in the air in Vietnam."



Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) began in 1967, with six veterans of the war marching in a peace demonstration. Forty-eight years later, VVAW is still going strong. vvaw.org

This was only the latest unfolding in that Westward movement, the empire's relentless drive to destroy and subdue Wilderness, the "savages" who inhabited it, and all of nature. The situation was essentially the same when the U.S. began to intervene in Vietnam as it was for Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893 when he wrote his famous declaration that the dominant fact in American life had been expansion of its frontier. Though expansion had reached the Pacific coast, the rising imperial star of the U.S. indicated clearly to him that the movement would continue. This national mystique of Manifest Destiny plunged the Anglo-Americans into wars in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, the Philippines, and beyond.

In the mid-nineteenth century, explorer and land speculator, William Gilpin, had written of the American destiny "to subdue the continent—to rush over this vast field to the Pacific Ocean. . . to stir up the sleep of a hundred centuries—to teach old nations a new civilization—to confirm the destiny of the human race. . . to cause a stagnant people to be reborn—to perfect science. . . to shed a new and resplendent glory upon mankind. . ."

This "perfected science" was the locomotive of modernity crystallized in the American Empire and its dream of conquest. The destruction of Vietnamese society by the bureaucrats and the Calleys was only the most modern incarnation of that "glory." By the time these conquerors and Indian fighters reached Indochina, the frontier had become Kennedy's "New Frontier," his "relentless struggle in every corner of the globe." As Drinnon writes, the troops were now being sent "into action against disorder on a frontier

that had become planetary.”

The Vietnamese, whether they were the enemy or the vassals of the U.S., were considered stupid savages, “Orientals,” in General William Westmoreland’s words, who placed a lower value on life than Westerners. The National Liberation Front (NLF) guerrillas fighting the invaders were nothing but “termites” in the General’s eyes, who showed his humanitarian concern for the country by advising that “We have to get the right balance of termite killers to get rid of the termites without wrecking the house.”

An adviser in Pleiku told the head of the International Voluntary Service that the Montagnards (tribal highlanders) “have to realize that they are expendable,” adding that the “Montagnard problem” could be solved “like we solved the Indian problem.”

“Is it an exaggeration to suggest,” wrote Noam Chomsky in 1970, “that our history of extermination and racism is reaching its climax in Vietnam today? It is not a question that Americans can easily put aside.”

Indeed, this is the theme of Drinnon’s powerful book: since there was no end to this frontier being vanquished by the Empire, “Winning the West amounted to no less than winning the world. It could be finally and decisively ‘won’ only by rationalizing (Americanizing, Westernizing, modernizing) the world, and that meant conquering the land beyond, banishing mystery, and negating or extirpating other peoples, so the whole would be subject to the regimented reason of one settlement culture with its professedly self-evident middle-class values.”

But the “stagnant peoples” had their own vision of destiny. A veteran told the *Times*’ Lelyveld, “I don’t think the people wanted to be saved. . . .” When the conquerors saw the people wouldn’t, and couldn’t, be “saved,” they set out, within the terms of their mad equation, to destroy them, using all the perfected science at their disposal to accomplish the destruction.

THE “LUNERIZATION PROGRAM”

The monstrous absurdity of pioneer arrogance saw its culmination in that unspeakable war—a war Lyndon Johnson’s vice-president Hubert Humphrey dubbed, “America’s finest hour.” The entire might of the technological megamachine was pitted against a small, poor, archaic peasant region. The proportions—in comparative wealth, in technology, in firepower—were obscene.

At any given time, the difference in firepower ranged anywhere from 50 to 1, to 500 to 1. The war represented “the triumph of the principles and values of the industrial bureaucracy,” a “General Motors of Death,” as Gordon Livingston, a regimental surgeon who served there, put it later. At the 1970 U.S. Congress war crimes hearings, he testified, “The magnitude of the effort, the paperwork, and the middle-management attitude of many of the participants, as well as the predilection for charts and statistics—including that most dehumanizing and absurd figure of all, the body

count—all these represent the triumph of technocracy over reason.”

This quintessentially techno-bureaucratic campaign against Vietnam flowed from the same hatred and poverty of spirit that fueled the wars against the indigenous peoples of this continent. It was a deep-seated hatred, founded upon guilt and a sense of separation, so it had to be manifested in a war against the earth itself. But this time, all the demonic instruments of technology were available to the crusade.

The aerial bombardment was unrivaled in the history of warfare. Already, by 1969, South Vietnam, North Vietnam and Laos were the three most heavily bombed countries in history. “The unparalleled, lavish use of firepower,” a U.S. military analyst wrote laconically, “is an outstanding characteristic of U.S. military tactics in the Vietnam war.”

“Translated into human terms,” commented historian Gabriel Kolko, “the United States has made South Vietnam a sea of fire as a matter of policy, turning an entire nation into a target.” “On some days in 1969,” reported ecologist John Lewallen in his book, *Ecology of Devastation* (1971), “800 sorties were flown [in northern Laos], dropping napalm, phosphorous, and anti-personnel bombs. One old man described the effects: ‘First the houses and fruit trees were burned, then the fields and the hillside and even the stream was on fire.’” Bombing became so intense by that year that at times it went on for twenty-four hours a day, and farming, if it could be done at all, could only take place at night.

The use of herbicides was even more devastating. “To a counterinsurgent,” wrote Lewallen, “plants are the allies of the insurgent.” E. W. Pfeiffer, a zoologist sent to Indochina by the American Association for the Advancement of Science to study ecological consequences of the war, compared the U.S. policy of bombing, defoliation, and mass plowing with giant bulldozers with the extermination of the buffalo herds in the American West. “This modern program,” he reported in 1971, “has as destructive an influence on the social fabric of Indochinese life as did the ecocide (destruction of ecology) of the American West upon the American Indian.”

The very soil of Indochina was being destroyed by bombing and defoliation, increasing salination, flooding, erosion and drought.

Vietnam, once a major exporter of rice, now had to import it from the U.S. due to crop destruction and the disruption of agriculture. Huge tracts of mangrove, evergreen rain forest, and fruit trees were wiped out, leading to the breakdown of associated ecosystems, especially in the Mekong Delta. By December 1970, at least 35 percent of South Vietnam’s fourteen million acres of dense forests had been sprayed.

The monstrous absurdity of pioneer arrogance saw its culmination in that unspeakable war—a war Hubert Humphrey dubbed, “America’s finest hour.”

A “food denial” program was also implemented by the Americans to starve the insurgents into submission. This meant massive spraying of croplands and destruction of food stores. The insurgents, being more mobile, were able to evade some of the circumstances brought about by defoliation, but the villagers left behind starved. Many animal species, particularly birds and aquatic food chains, were destroyed by the chemical warfare.

The purpose of American “pacification” was to pave the spiritual and political soil of village identity to make it accessible to American tanks. To “dry up the sea” in which the rebels swam, they had to remove the people from the land itself, forcibly relocating entire villages to so-called “strategic hamlets” (concentration camps), and to the desperation of the cities, turning their old lands into “free-fire zones” where anything that moved was a target.

As a result of this campaign and NLF resistance to it, by 1970 a third of the people of South Vietnam had become internal refugees. In the first six months of that year, another half a million refugees were “generated” by forced removal and wanton destruction. This figure would even be too conservative, since many refugees were never accounted for by official U.S./South Vietnamese government head counts.

“The large majority of the refugees, as every objective account agrees, were seeking to escape the free-fire zones and the rain of fire the Americans were showering on them,” Gabriel Kolko reported. “You have to be able to separate the sheep from the goats,” said one Pentagon-sponsored analyst. “The way to do it is harsh. You would have to put all military-age males in the army or in a camp as you pacify the country. Anyone not in the army or in a camp is a target. He’s either a Viet Cong or is helping them.”

Vietnamese culture, as Frances Fitzgerald pointed out, was wrecked by forced relocation and flight to the cities: “As they took life from the earth and from the ancestors, so they would find immortality in their children, who in their turn would take their place upon the earth. To leave the land and the family forever was therefore to lose their place in the universe and to suffer a permanent, collective death.”

Many analysts and experts in the pay of the empire found a rosier side to this havoc. For example, Samuel P. Huntington, Chairman of the Department of Government at Harvard University, contributed to *Foreign Affairs* in 1968 a rather cheerful view of history and the American cultural devastation. “In an absent-minded way,” wrote the professor from the comfort of his study, “the United States may have stumbled upon the answer to ‘wars of national liberation.’”

War, he argued, wasn’t in and of itself the answer,



Veterans For Peace is a global organization of military veterans who work to inform the public of the true causes of war, with an obligation to heal the wounds of wars.
veteransforpeace.org

but more importantly the “forced-draft urbanization and modernization which rapidly brings the country in question out of the phase in which a rural revolutionary movement can hope to generate sufficient strength to come to power.” The solution was to produce “a massive migration from countryside to city.” In this way, with bombs and slaughter, did the empire “stir the sleep of a hundred centuries.” By 1967, Senator William J. Fulbright remarked that Saigon, representative of all the towns of South Vietnam by being swollen to some four times its previous population, had become “an American brothel.”

A COUNTRY SHATTERED

In the end, the U.S. had converted the South, in Fitzgerald’s words, into “a country shattered so that no two pieces fit together.” Shattering the country—by depopulating the countryside, by defoliation and carpet bombing, by terror and imposed dependence upon the U.S. military—was the method which the crackpot bureaucratic ideologues sanguinely recommended as the solution to the “Vietnamese problem.”

Destroying that latest incarnation of the “howling wilderness infested by bloodthirsty savages”—the lush Vietnamese rainforests and grasslands where a “VC” was hidden behind every tree—and physically liquidating whoever resisted the salvation America so nobly offered, became the only solution to an irresolvable problem. Only in such a way could the “credibility” of the empire be restored and the rising tide of nationalist revolution be halted.

Everyday occurrences of atrocities and brutality against the Vietnamese became so commonplace that they ceased to be reported as news. Pfc. Allen Akers, who served in the 3rd Marine Division, testified at the Winter Soldier Investigation on war crimes in Vietnam convened by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War in Detroit in early 1971:

“We were given orders whenever we moved into a village to reconnoiter by fire. This means to—when ever we step into a village to fire upon houses, bushes, anything to our discretion that looked like there might be somebody hiding behind or under. . . we’d carry our rifles about hip high and we’d line up on line parallel to the village and start walking, firing from the hip.”

The list of brutality is endless, which explains psychologist Robert J. Lifton’s observation that of the two hundred or so soldiers he and his colleagues interviewed, none was surprised by the news of My Lai.

“They had not been surprised because they have either been party to, or witness to, or have heard fairly close-hand about hundreds or thousands of similar, if smaller incidents.”

Said Marine Sgt. Scott Camil in his Winter Soldier

testimony, "It wasn't like they were humans. We were conditioned to believe that this was for the good of the nation. . . . And, when you shot someone you didn't think you were shooting at a human. They were a gook or a Commie and it was okay. And anything you did to them was okay because like they would tell you they'd do it to you if they had the chance."

Others reported destroying rice and livestock, killing of unarmed persons, running people down on the road with trucks and tanks, desecrating graves, throwing people out of helicopters, throwing cans of C-rations at children by the sides of roads, firing 50-caliber machine guns at villages for sport, Nazi-style revenge massacres of whole villages after a GI was killed by a sniper, burning of huts with the people inside, firing at peasants in ox-carts from planes simply to finish off unused ammunition, torturing "VC suspects" by attaching electrical wires to their genitalia (called the "Bell Telephone Hour" by soldiers), rape and murder of women, burning of villages.

Robert Opton, Jr., who was in Vietnam in 1968 as a reporter, wrote in 1970, "Winning the hearts and minds' of the Vietnamese is now maintained only as a public relations product for consumption on the home market."

Yet among many soldiers there was the grotesque complaint that they were fighting "with one arm tied behind our back," a complaint bellowed today by those who have no shame. What more could they have been allowed in order to carry on their grisly business? Opton noted that among soldiers he interviewed in Vietnam, "many felt that a final solution was the best and perhaps only solution, and many of their officers agreed.

Extermination of the Vietnamese people, some officers felt, would be the best way to protect the men under them." So the only way to "save" the Vietnamese would be to annihilate them all, which was probably true in terms of winning the war, since the Vietnamese were willing to fight to the bitter end to throw out the invaders. It was this heroic resistance which impeded the extermination from taking place.

There was also the fear on the part of war planners that the war could expand beyond their ability to "manage" it effectively. A widening of the conflict could also draw more massive protest against what was becoming increasingly unpopular back home, and resistance in the army itself, which was starting to break down and turn against the war.

David Halberstam reports in his book *The Best and the Brightest* that in late 1966, the military was urging Lyndon Johnson to bomb Hanoi and Haiphong and to block the harbor. Johnson replied, "I have one more problem for your computer—will you feed into it how long it will take five hundred thousand angry Americans to climb that White House fence out there and lynch their President if he does something like that?"

Daniel Ellsberg pointed out much later that it was only the resistance to the war by Ameri-

cans at home that prevented Richard Nixon from committing that ultimate atrocity of dropping nuclear weapons on North Vietnam. Such an escalation could be the only logic of the statement current among those who refuse to face the reality of the hideous crusade, that the U.S. military was "not allowed to win." It is the culmination of the "Indian idea."

BLOODBATHS

The Americans may not have been able to impose a final solution on the Indochinese, but they did enough damage in the course of that war to wreck the societies and lay the basis for further carnage, as in Cambodia, making Nixon's cynical warning of a "bloodbath" a self-fulfilling prophecy. If some 58,000 American soldiers died in Vietnam and another 300,000 were wounded, and we add to that list the startling number of suicides among veterans since the war, some 50,000, how can these horrifying figures compare to those of three million Vietnamese killed and 4.5 million wounded?

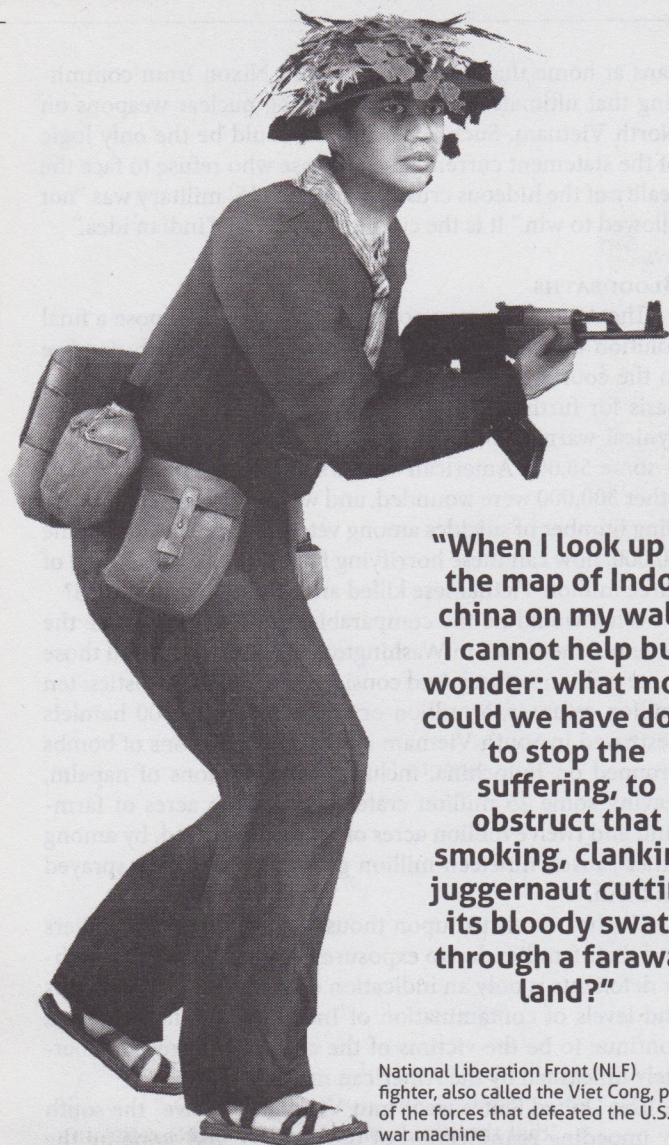
What would be the comparable length of a wall like the veterans' memorial in Washington, D.C. if it contained those three million names? And consider some other statistics: ten million refugees, a million orphans, nearly 10,000 hamlets destroyed in South Vietnam alone: 6,600,000 tons of bombs dropped on Indochina, including 400,000 tons of napalm, leaving some 25 million craters; 25 million acres of farmland and twelve million acres of forests destroyed, by among other causes, nineteen million gallons of defoliants sprayed on them.

The horror visited upon thousands of American soldiers and their families due to exposure to Agent Orange and other defoliants is only an indication of the far greater numbers and levels of contamination of Indochinese who were and continue to be the victims of the chemical plagues deliberately unleashed by the American masters of war.

The United States went into Vietnam to "save" the south by impeding reunification of the country and stopping the communists from assuming power over the entire country. In so doing, it wrecked the possibility of any diversity in Vietnamese society (or Laotian or Cambodian), of anyone but the communists coming to power, by uprooting and destroying the very groups that could have resisted or offset control by the Stalinists—the regional political groups and religious sects, the tribespeople of the highlands, the Buddhists, and other political tendencies.

The U.S. claimed its desire to prevent domination of the south by northerners. Yet during the Tet Offensive in 1968 and the "Operation Phoenix" program of mass assassinations, jailings and relocations which followed in the early 1970s, it exterminated the mainly southern NLF cadres,

So, the only way to "save" the Vietnamese would be to annihilate them all, since they were willing to fight to the bitter end to throw out the invaders.



"When I look up at the map of Indochina on my wall, I cannot help but wonder: what more could we have done to stop the suffering, to obstruct that smoking, clanking juggernaut cutting its bloody swath through a faraway land?"

National Liberation Front (NLF) fighter, also called the Viet Cong, part of the forces that defeated the U.S. war machine

making northern domination of the culturally distinct south another self-fulfilling prophecy (indeed, perhaps a necessity for the Vietnamese if they were going to win the war).

"The U.S. has changed Vietnam," wrote Fitzgerald, "to the point where it is unrecognizable to Vietnamese. . . and flattened the local ethnic, religious, and cultural peculiarities beneath a uniform, national disaster."

Now, we could only expect the grotesque spectacle in which history has been rewritten so that Americans can continue to evade individual and collective guilt for the slaughter of the Indochinese and the wrecking of their societies.

One particularly repellent example was President Carter's astonishing statement in March 1977 that, "The destruction was mutual. We went to Vietnam without any desire to capture territory or impose American will on other people. I don't feel we ought to apologize or castigate ourselves or to assume the status of culpability."

Vietnamese author Ngo Vinh Long reports that "A professor at Hue University likened [the statement] to a rapist saying that his victims hurt him as much as he hurt them." Yet, incredibly, the refusal by Americans to face the truth of American culpability has brought about exactly such a reversal in many people's minds.

The atrocities and injustices which followed in the wake of the U.S. war—which could only be seen as the tragic consequences of American devastation, as further proof that a holocaust does not create conditions for reconciliation and freedom but only for more holocaust and tyranny—these crimes are now employed by propagandists as a justification for the original violence that prepared the ground for them.

The question never seems to be raised that even if the Indochinese were destined to mutual wars and dictatorship—a frequent occurrence in the troubled Third World—how could that justify the American intervention, the millions dead and wounded, the ruination of traditional forms of life which may have helped to prevent such brutality?

In fact, it is one of the war's tragic ironies that the forced modernization so fondly touted as a solution by U.S. analysts like the Harvard Government professor will now be carried out by the Stalinists rather than the fascist puppets of the Americans.

And only because the U.S. pulverized that society so thoroughly that the only force left which was capable of creating a new society of any kind was the communists. It is hard to say what would have happened if the Indian fighters had not marched into that valley, but once they did their dirty work, the consequences could only be a foregone conclusion.

AMERICA'S NEXT VIETNAM

When I look up at the map of Indochina on my wall, I cannot help but wonder: what more could we have done to stop the suffering, to obstruct that smoking, clanking juggernaut cutting its bloody swath through a faraway land?

To all the apologists for genocide, paid and unpaid, who repeat the imperial lie that the antiwar movement, which eventually became the great majority of Americans, inside and outside the military, "betrayed" the war effort, I can only reply: *We didn't do enough to undermine and betray your war.*

If there is any lesson to be learned from that war which can aid us in understanding the situation we find ourselves in today, it is that lesson—that now that the soil is being blood-stained by new, hellish wars, now that the engines of holocaust are again filling the air with their terrifying drone, we must find a way to rally our spirits once more, to blockade the beast, to stop its murderous career.

Yesterday is today and today is tomorrow. The Vietnam wars are an American creation.

It is here—and it is we who must act—where they will be stopped once and for all.

David Watson is a long-time staff member, and now contributor to the *Fifth Estate*. His book, *Against the Megamachine*, is available from AKpress.org



Rather than being spit on, returning GIs and veterans led anti-war demonstrations, as in this photo from 1970.

The Mythical Imagery of the American “Great Betrayal” Narrative Nobody Spat on American GIs!

JERRY LEMBCKE

Stories of spat-on veterans began proliferating in the U.S. media in 1990 as the country ramped up for the first Persian Gulf War. Anti-war activists had spat on troops returning from Vietnam, or so the stories went, and to make sure that did not happen again, Americans were urged to rally around the men and women dispatched to the Gulf. Within weeks, the nation was awash with yellow ribbons, symbols of support for troops, and by inference, the mission on which they had been sent.

The classic spitting story is told by a Vietnam veteran who deplaned at San Francisco’s airport and was met by spitting women and hippies or “male long-hairs,” some carrying placards reading, “Baby Killer.”

Several of the story tellers say they were warned by military authorities on the plane to go immediately to the airport restroom and change into civilian clothes lest they be attacked by protesters. One caller to a radio show interview with me said that he observed the trash can in the restroom piled high with uniforms. When he was asked if there were any photographs of the piled-uniforms, he was gone.

The Gulf War context may have catalyzed, “I was spat on, too,” stories that had never been told before—a kind of copycat phenomenon. But the accounts only proliferated after that.

With research help from Holy Cross College student Lynn Barowsky in 2008, I began collecting the first-person spitting stories and entering their details into a spread sheet. To my surprise, the frequency of stories-told had not diminished since they first trended in the early 1990s. I have now recorded over 200 stories from returning vets, all of whom relate some variant of the spitting image.

My 1998 book, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*, delved into the origins of the stories and inquired into their persistence. I was careful not to call the stories lies, and even allowed that some version of their classic form may have actually occurred—after all, you cannot prove a negative. However, there is no evidence that such incidences actually hap-

pened, and a scant record of claims in the media or anywhere else made during the late 1960s and early 1970s when the corporate media would have made every effort to cast aspersions on anti-war activists.

Some particulars in the stories could not be true, such as returnees from Vietnam landing at civilian airports like San Francisco. Rather, those planes arrived at military facilities such as Travis Air Force Base, 50 miles north of the city where protesters could not have gotten near deplaning troops.

Also, it was very unlikely that returning soldiers would have been told to take off their uniforms. Discarding their uniforms would have meant abandoning military property, a serious offense that returning soldiers looking forward to getting home and out of the service would have been hesitant to commit. Plus, it is implausible that young women would spit on anyone as a form of political expression, let alone a battle-hardened male soldier.

Stories of protester hostility toward veterans were incongruent with the historical record that activists had reached out and recruited veterans to the cause of ending the war, and that thousands of service personnel returning from Southeast Asia joined the anti-war movement.

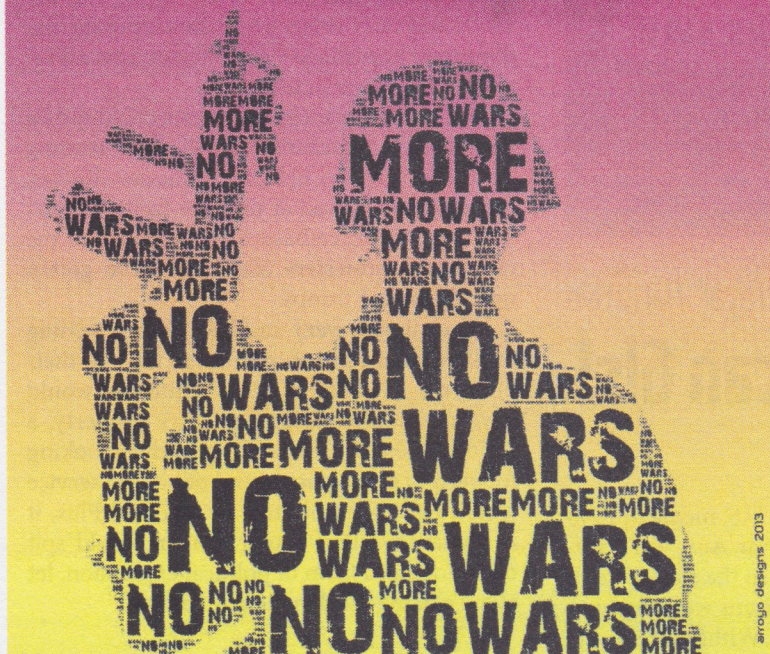
The image of spat-on veterans was displacing memory of veterans politicized and empowered by their wartime experience. The consequence of that displacement would be evinced years later when a new generation, oblivious to the political narrative of antiwar veterans, sought identity within victim-veteran imagery provided by the mental health discourse of PTSD.

I was most fascinated by the fact that similar stories were told after other lost wars including Germany following World War I and France after its loss of Indochina in 1954. In both cases, it was women who were alleged to have greeted returned veterans hostilely. The German women, some with pistols tucked in their skirts, were said to have spat on the soldiers.

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Make Love; Not War! & the Spirit of the Times

Penelope Rosemont



Words embody, embrace, define an era. Make Love, Not War, a slogan 1960s rebels created fifty years ago in March 1965 is still around today, often echoed, modified, mocked, transformed. (A wonderful Berkeley Bakery, for instance, boasts, “Make Bread, Not War,” on its banner.)

The original saying was created at Chicago’s Solidarity Bookshop, a “do-it-yourself-revolution project” of Roosevelt University anarchists and IWW members who decided to make an anti-war button. What came to mind was the old Fellowship of Reconciliation slogan “Make Peace, Not War,” but this didn’t reflect our thinking; it was too tame.

We sought more than peace. Tired of the repressive attitudes of the ‘50s, we wanted nothing less than “totally liberated desire.” Several of us working at the bookshop, Bernard Marszalek, Tor Faegre, Franklin Rosemont, and myself, decided to substitute “love” for “peace” and so it became the iconic, “Make Love, Not War.”

The button was printed at a shop above Kroch’s & Brentano’s Bookstore on Wabash Avenue. The layout and design were mine for the most part. Doing the curved type by hand letter-by-letter around the CND peace sign was tricky. The bookshop was in touch with London’s Freedom Press and

The origin of the famous anti-war slogan came from anarchists and Surrealists who wanted more than peace!

knew about the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament’s activity through its great little mag, *Anarchy*, edited by Colin Ward.

Though the button was made for a Mother’s Day peace march in Chicago, it was sex, not motherly love that was on our minds. We were influenced by Emma Goldman’s idea of Free Love, the Marquis de Sade’s concept of sexual freedom, the Mad Love of surrealism, Herbert Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*, and Wilhelm Reich’s theories on sexual repression and fascism. We were not thinking of religious love either; we were all atheists and militantly anti-religious.

For us women, the invention of birth control and the greater availability of information about sexuality was indeed a Revolution. For the first time in history women could enjoy worry-free sex. Part of the amazing joyousness of that time of war and social dislocation was due to greater sexual freedom. When you glance at the photos of the

time, it seems like one big party.

Interestingly, *Creative Review*, an advertising, design and visual culture journal, places “Make Love, Not War” as number 4 in its top twenty slogans and points to “Chicago not just as the birthplace of ‘Make Love Not War,’ but also explains how the simple, cheeky phrase spread from a Chicago bookshop to placards around the world. . . [I]t was they who appear to have done most to popularize its use.”

Others claimed the slogan, as well, and it would not be the first time in history that simultaneous discovery occurred. Diane Newell Meyer, a University of Oregon student at the time, says she wrote, “Let’s make love not war,” on an envelope and pinned it to her sweater before attending a demo in April 1965.

Besides distributing the “Make Love, Not War” buttons at that Mother’s Day march, the Solidarity Bookshop anarchists circulated them and the slogan through our mimeo’d Wobbly mag, the *Rebel Worker*, through *Resurgence*, the new York City paper edited by Jonathan Leake and Walter Caughey; and through Bruce Elwell and the *Green Revolution*. Through *Rebel Worker* we were in touch with underground newspapers across the country and wrote for *Radical America*.

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Chopper

C.W. BOLES

It doesn't take long before you fall in love with a helicopter.

The ponderous, heavy, and wholly improbable flight of a cargo plane, or the enclosed cocoon of a commercial airliner are too similar to driving in a delivery truck rather than tearing down the highway in a four-seat convertible.

The chopper has its own rhythm, and moves impossibly in all directions—or none at all; still as a kite, if not quite as silent.

Floating above the war; that's how you see it. Not only floating, but careening at the treetops, unconcerned with jungle combat, which you know from chewing the fat with your buddies, is relentlessly hot, sticky, oppressively humid.

Above it, you're always in the sun, but never a slave to its heat. Altitude in a chopper is like being on the good side of a giant fan all the time. Even when you're hovering, the blades move the air all around you, pulling away the heat and circulating the coolness. You can get lost in the drone of the engine, the whirring of the rotors, the groaning of the metal as it fights against gravity.

Even when you fire on the jungle below, you don't think you're shooting at the Viet Cong. You never see them, you only point and aim your guns where the guys on the ground say they're taking fire from.

You don't care if you hit them or not; the body counts are the responsibility of those who called you in to help them. All you think about and feel is the giddy joy, the invulnerability of mechanized flight. Nothing can touch you up here.

When you're flying over an area where you're shooting almost straight down into the trees, or at a high angle into a tree-line, you come out of the glare of the sun, suddenly vis-

ible. You know it sounds and looks impressive and dangerous and deadly to anyone on the ground.

When you swoop down on a combat zone, you're invincible. You're fast, you're in a box of armored steel (despite the open doors), and you've got superior firepower. You have the best pilots in the world, and the best equipment. You hoot and holler. You can't help being in love.

Until some VC marksman with a light machine gun, something like the M60 you have mounted at your doors, gets a bead on you. The racket those bullets make as they slam into the undercarriage and the walls and the ceiling of the chopper is unmistakable, and horrifying. When they hit your M60, your great machine gun is ripped open like a splintering twig. When their bullets hit flesh, they force hunks of blood and meat to splatter the interior walls, sometimes getting swept up and out in the air currents made by the rotors.

Getting hit by a bullet is one thing. It hurts like hell, but the pain tells you that you'll probably survive. When you don't know you're hit, where you only feel numb, those are the ones that are sure to maim and kill. You've already heard those stories from your wounded buddies, but that's only part of the panic.

When the chopper is hit, everything changes immediately. You're no longer in an invulnerable and indestructible airship dealing death from above without any serious response from the enemy.

Now, you're in a lumbering box, something that moves just too god damn slow no matter what the pilot does, a huge easy target, a sitting duck, dangling, huge, the nearest and most visible item in the sky. There's no cover; if it's been hit once, it will be hit again—and again.

Now, there's no place to fly to; no retreat fast enough. In all the possible directions a helicopter can move, none are safe anymore. There's no means of escaping the rest of the enemy

platoon or what must be a whole fucking regiment that's about to find the one target in the sky they can all see and find in range.

When you start to fall, you feel the need to piss, shit, and puke all at the same time. There's no way to steady yourself, no way to trick your body into staying calm. You know you're falling and there's nothing you can do about it.

The horizon slips and your belly cramps; your diaphragm heaves, trying to keep your heart and lungs together and intact but abandoning your guts, pulling your insides in both directions at once. Your ass cheeks tighten involuntarily even as you know you're about to shit yourself.

There's no way you can close your eyes. The sudden surprise of your imminent death is just too fascinating.

You know it's possible to survive a helicopter crash; you've heard those stories, too. But you know somehow that such things only happen to other guys. Now, you hate this helicopter, this epitome of technological hubris, this enormous metal coffin that you're inexorably trapped in.



Continued from Page 36

We also sold buttons at the Mole Hole, a Chicago button shop at North and Wells, a destination for young people leaving mid-western small towns and hitch-hiking across the country in search of a Kerouac "On the Road" experience. Mole-Hole founder, Earl Siegel, founded the Chicago *Seed*.

One of our good friends, Lester Dore, also worked on the *Seed* and put the slogan into his weird and wonderful '60s graphics. Buttons were distributed by us at demos in Chicago and Madison, and Be-Ins in New York and at radical bookstores all over the country.

Lester Dore, Robert Green, Franklin and I all went to Europe in 1965-66. Franklin and I visited anarchists and surrealists in London and Paris, including André Breton. Wherever we went, we wore buttons we had made with various slogans.

The Revolt of 1968 brought the slogan, "All Power to the Imagination" to the walls of Paris and the eyes of the world—surrealist inspired. Between "Make Love, Not War," and "All Power to the imagination!" expressions of ecstatic revolt and marvelous freedom, an anarchist way of life is expressed, one that demands everything!

Penelope Rosemont edited *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*. Her latest book is a memoir, *Dreams & Everyday Life: Andre Breton, Surrealism, Rebel Worker, Sods & the Seven Cities of Cibola*, Charles H. Kerr, publisher.

You hate it now, in these few seconds, much more than you ever loved it for all the weeks and months you've been in it. You blame it for killing you. You can't blame the enemy; all he did was chance upon this gift of an irresistible target, this machine that encapsulates everything he loathes about America.

It's not his fault that you were in the best and easiest thing to shoot at, to hit, to destroy. His joy at killing you is certainly as great as yours was at the thought of killing his comrades just a few minutes before.

And the bullets, adding a sickening staccato accompaniment to the screaming alarms of the chopper controls, keep smashing into the metal, your flesh, your mind. Even as you're falling at 32 feet per second per second, you know you're not falling fast enough to dodge them, and you find it appallingly unfair.

C. W. Boles is a musician, animal lover, and aspiring storyteller living in Northern California. This is his first published piece of fiction.

Out of Love Continued from P. 23

Then, through our choices and the patterns of our every day collective behavior. Short on love, long on addiction, violence, domination. Love does not pass easily in our world.

At the very least and short of any measures we might take to rework our world, we can and must unblock the pathways of love, both within ourselves—to love ourselves—and between ourselves and others, as best we can. At the individual level, the struggle to love and be loved should not be abandoned as we begin to grasp how little we get from our efforts.

Falling and being in love are uniquely beautiful experiences. Something so irresistible has nonetheless become so full of disappointment. Failed love is more a consequence of excessive expectations than of conflict or loss of interest.

At a powerfully emotional level, we unconsciously expect our lover to fill us with all the love we have lost over the decades and centuries forfeited by living the way we now collectively do. Plumbing the depths of this disconnect between expectation and outcome can surely help us adjust the former, and our perspective more generally, as we proceed in relationship and partnership building.

Collectively, we must rework our world; conspire (from the Latin *conspirare*; to plot together; literally, to breathe together) to renounce the mythologies of our culture, to begin or continue to re-form small-scale communities, and to reacquire ourselves with the sustaining earth and sky around us.

Into this wider and deeper basket of care, the love that lovers enjoy will find a home.

Jim Tull is a drummer, learning facilitator, and cultural activist living in Providence. He teaches college in Rhode Island and at the state prison. jtull@providence.edu.

Nobody Spat on American GIs!

Continued from Page 35

The German scholar Klaus Theveleit, in his two-volume, *Male Fantasies*, examined the stories and judged them to be what his title exclaimed—male fantasies. Theveleit used a Freudian analysis to explain that the stories were expressions of male fears of women with male powers—even the power to project body fluids.

In turn, the scapegoating of women masked veterans' fears of their own female inner-Other laying hidden in the subconscious until brought to the surface by battlefield defeat casting doubt on their masculinity.

Theveleit's psychoanalytic study centered on veterans who were key members of the Freikorps, formed to suppress the revolutionary upsurge in Germany following World War I. Many of his subjects became prominent Nazis a decade later.

One might think that with the passage of time and the efforts like my own to debunk the spitting stories as myth, their telling would be a past-tense phenomenon—the kind of stories “once told” that are now known to be folklore. But one would be wrong.

The October/November 2014 issue of *AARP Magazine* ran a story written by Gary Sinise, the actor who played Lieutenant Dan in the movie, “Forest Gump,” who related a story his brother-in-law, Jack, told upon returning from Vietnam. Jack ducked into the airport's men's room to shed his uniform because, “he'd heard the stories about returning soldiers being spit on.” It was what happened “at home” during the war, wrote Sinise, that inspired his commitment to see that it didn't happen again and that the troops sent to “protect our liberties” will be appreciated and cared for.

I continue to receive stories sent to me as evidence that Vietnam veterans had been spat on. The most recent was received on January 22, 2015 from a veteran who returned through San Francisco in 1970:

“I was followed by five or six hippies who immediately started cussing at me, calling me all kinds of names and spit at me. They didn't hit me since they were bad shots. I realized that to hit them would create a disturbance, involve the police, and the odds were against me. So, I continued on and got onto my plane. To this day, I don't even like to go back to that area of the country.”

This fellow was quite angry with me for describing stories like his as myths. In a set of email exchanges between us, he said I was calling men like him “liars” and expressed doubt

that I “had ever served my country” and speculated that I had an “anti-military agenda.”

Stories of spat-on Vietnam veterans have become so ingrained in the American discourse about war and veterans that they can now be referenced matter-of-factly with no acknowledgement of their mythical properties. Their migration from bar-stools to the higher cultural ground of literary trope has been assisted by mainstream news organizations, which, with few exceptions, repeat the spit-on stories uncritically.

As recently as February 22 of this year, *The New York Times* Sunday Review repeated the canard—“. . . with Vietnam, people spit on you . . .”—as if it's just something that everyone knows to be true.

As one of the Vietnam War's more enduring legacies, the stories of denigrated veterans are now salted into the biographies of the latest generation. The late Navy SEAL Chris Kyle, wrote in his book *American Sniper*, of being disparaged in San Diego upon his deployment to Iraq. He recalled passing

“a small group of protesters demonstrating against the war. They had signs about baby killers and whatever, protesting the troops going over to fight.”

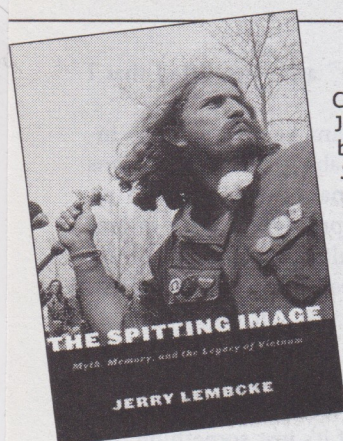
The new stories also continue a pattern in which claims of mistreatment by anti-war activists are often bundled in resumes displaying remarkable martial accomplishment. In his blog, culture critic Michael McCaffrey, challenged the veracity of several boosts made by Kyle and gave particular attention to the “baby killer” incident. It was, said McCaffrey, “at worst, pure fantasy; at best, a great embellishment.”



Stab in the Back Legend: An illustration from an 1919 Austrian postcard showing a caricatured Jew stabbing the German Army in the back with a dagger. It is always the despised Other who betrays the valient troops in the fascist ideology.

The American betrayal narrative was provided Presidential imprimatur when Barak Obama used his 2012 Memorial Day speech to announce a \$65 million Pentagon plan to commemorate the war in Vietnam with a 12-year series of events running across the 50th anniversary dates of the war. Speaking to cameras with the Veterans Memorial Wall as the backdrop, the President called the Vietnam War, “one of the nation's most painful chapters.” Treatment of Vietnam veterans he said, “. . . was a national shame, a disgrace that should have never happened. . . . We're here today to see that it doesn't happen again.”

News pundits were quick to associate the President's remarks with the enduring images of the Vietnam era spat-upon veteran. The *Los Angeles Times* editorialized in 2012 that “it was a mythical image—an edifying myth,” the writer said, but still a myth. An edifying myth—and a dangerous myth. The disparaged Vietnam veterans invoked by President Obama are mythical, and it is dangerous imagery. Myths are group stories, stories as real as the people who tell them—as real >>>



Cover of Jerry Lembcke's book, *The Spitting Image*, showing a VVAW member throwing his Vietnam war medals at the Pentagon.

as the group, the nation, that the stories create.

Nations bonded by commitments to avenge their hurts are dangers to all. Germany's *dolchstoßlegende* led it into a terrifying campaign for retribution that, in the end, destroyed Germany itself. France's generals in the 1950s, feeling abandoned in Indochina by civilian leaders, sought reaffirmation in Algeria and inflamed the conflicts there with

consequences that Paris has still not outlived.

The United States having gone to the Persian Gulf in 1990 to "kick" its Vietnam Syndrome, as President George H. W. Bush said at the time, instead supercharged the jihadi movement into the World Trade center and found itself, years later, bogged down in a multi-front war with no end, much less victory, in sight.

Remembered by many as a war lost because of betrayal at home, Vietnam has become a modern-day Alamo that must be avenged, a pretext for more war and generations of more veterans.

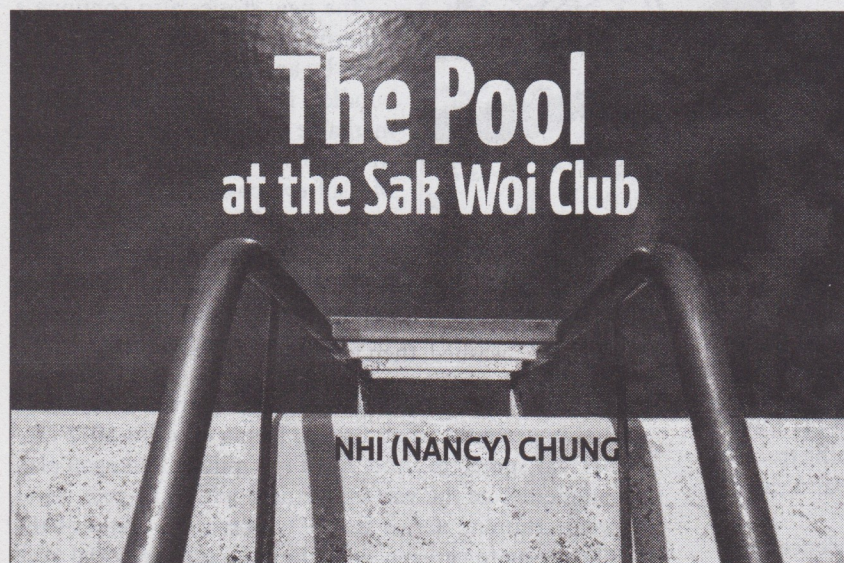
However, it more correctly should be remembered as a war in which soldiers, veterans and citizens joined hands to fight for peace demonstrating the effectiveness of popular resistance to political authority.

Obama's endorsement of the Pentagon's plan to remember Vietnam during the next 12 years as a war lost to betrayal on the home front only beclouds what *needs* to be remembered lest we are taken down the path to more wars like it.

We need to reject the political, economic, and militarist logic that leads to endless wars, and to remember the inspiring history of returning veterans who, along with the anti-war movement and GI resistance, brought the troops home from Vietnam.

Jerry Lembcke is the author of *The Spitting Image*, *Hanoi Jane: War, Sex, and Fantasies of Betrayal*, and *PTSD: Diagnosis and Identity for Post-empire America*.

In 1969, he was a Chaplain's Assistant assigned to the 41st Artillery Group in Vietnam. He is Associate Professor emeritus at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Mass. He can be reached at jlembcke@holycross.edu.



I. SAIGON, 1967

The wind in a room.

Often, though the club would be a hive of activity, with waiters, sunbathers, diners by the food counter, and children bounding through the wading area, the main indoor pool would be empty. A current of air would undulate along its placid surface, raising a single wavelet that glittered outstandingly like one flounce on a plain dress.

Ringling one side of the pool would be the French women in string bikinis with their shapely legs and (to me) awesome breasts, their bodies creamy with suntan lotion. These Europeans seldom went in the water, so the club was filled with swimsuit-garbed people who never swam. This made the pool like a bay

that was empty but surrounded by ships in drydock.

When I was 15 years old, I learned to swim there. I felt gangly and ungainly as I walked along past the row of reclining, full-bodied white women. As a rule, the Sak Woi Club (Club Rocher) was closed to Chinese, but because my father was a manager for the Taiwanese of a large (2,000 worker-strong) textile factory, our family was allowed to be members. Baba wouldn't pay for swimming lessons, so I would sit by the poolside and observe.

The French women always swam. . . curvaceously. Though their eyes and facial structure were concealed by goggles and cap, as they rose from the water, when doing the frog stroke, the delicate strings of their slim necks and shoulders were visible. I loved to see their sturdy flanks and muscular arms draped in water so transparent that they seemed to be swimming in a glass of white wine.

2. THU-DUC, 1976

The Chinese in the city had a saying, "*Man doe gung chan dong mai jow you jow fai de.*" ("When we smell the Communist wind, we have to run very fast.") The saying indicated the dread we felt when we knew

they were going to take over the country. The Vietnamese had no great love for the Chinese, and we knew we would bear a large brunt of the burden in supporting the country's reconstruction. What exactly this would cost us was unclear. We Saigonese Chinese waited like sheep who knew we would be sheared but not whether we would be slaughtered soon afterward.

Now, if there was one thing the Communists were expert at, even better than at contorting dialectics, it was at squeezing money.

Once the Communists came to power, the most deep-thinking Chinese, like my uncle, preempted intervention by immediately "donating" their goods and factories to the conquerors. Such people were given special consideration by the authorities. In the case of my uncle, well, he was an old man anyway.

Those who resisted such donations had their enterprises seized while they ended up imprisoned or dead. But what about those, like my father, who could not give up as much as they were expected to yield? Father quickly, if grumblingly, turned over all of his property; but he would give little more because he didn't have all the wealth, in gold or jewelry, they thought he had.

During the boom, he was always expanding our noodle factory, adding sheds, workers' housing and driveway. He kept returning his profits to the business. True, he was an old man now, too, but the Communists didn't trust him and they were desperate. Like a handful of dusty, bruised grapes, he must go in the press.

The government had three ways to get our money.

They changed the currency first. All old-style dollars had to be turned in. When you surrendered your money, you were registered and got \$50 (Vietnamese). If you turned in \$10, you got \$50. If you turned in \$1,000, you got the same \$50. You could only buy food with allotment coupons, and unless you were registered, you couldn't get those coupons. What good was the old money anyway? It was worthless on the world market.

Second, the government sent people to live in your house. These were high school students. They watched what you ate every day. As I stated, you received coupons for a certain amount of oil, vegetables and rice for each month. The students watched to see if you were eating more than your allotment. They kept asking you where you hid your jewelry and money.

They don't have any school at that time. They sent those little kids to live with you for months.

They search your house for money and follow you to see where you go.

Third, if they are convinced you have wealth, as they were in my aunt's case, since she owned a jewelry store, they capture you. They say to you, "I want you to come here. We have a few questions to ask you." Then they keep you in a hotel for months. They wake you up anytime and demand that you

tell them where your gold is. Almost every person who has a business gets this treatment. My aunt was in prison for many months.

Here is our situation.

Father had one Vietnamese clerk, Hue. All the others were Chinese. She was not as good as the others, but we needed someone who could write Vietnamese. She kept asking for a promotion, but never got one. Once the government seized the factory, she became the union representative. If you do that, you get a good job in the factory.

Father said this woman had betrayed us.

The factory was full of North Vietnamese soldiers. They were afraid we would steal something to sell.

Every morning all the employees had to sit in a circle. Father had to sit in the middle and Hue accused him of things.

I heard about a secret boat leaving the country and I asked my parents what to do.

My mother said, "How can a young lady survive? You will be cheated by people in America. We are diligent people. Let us all die together."

Father said, "I believe we can work hard to survive."

The rations were sparse. For six people for one month, three kilos rice. And it wasn't good rice, but *sa gook my*. Rice with sand inside and husks. We had to put the rice on white paper and pick out the dross. We cooked it mixed with *guy may*, that is, yams.

We were starving and mother went crying to uncle, who used to own a jewelry store. He began selling (his hidden) gold on the black market to get us food. This shamed father.

They put him at the center of the circle. "You oppressed your workers," Hue said. "You hid your gold. You must give it back to the people. Where is your gold?"

During the week, we slept at the factory in Thu-Doc. I rose at 4 a.m., washed, then would wake father.

One cold morning, near the time of French Christmas, I remember a sluice of cold wind that stove through the wooden wall slats. I woke timidly, still flattened out like a tire tread by lack of sleep, vigor and food. I was so hungry, like a slave to hunger. Sometimes I would steal and wolf down raw noodles when the soldiers weren't looking.

That morning I brushed the water along my face. I felt it hitting me like a series of slaps.

The hallway was filled with cats, prowling and meowing. Many hung around the factory and encampment, waiting for droppings of food and hunting down our abundant mice. I bent to chuck my favorite under the chin.

Father's door was hard to open. When I got it open, I saw him in bed, staring at the ceiling, as if entranced by the dirty tar paper. His mouth was open like a flap or like a pouch ready to receive a coin: his skin no longer orangeish but white. Perhaps milk had been spilled all over him. His hand was curved like a chicken foot. >>>

I tried to shut the door, crying, pushing back all those

filthy animals. For if a cat crosses a dead man's body, the corpse will rise.

3. SAIGON, 1976

I stood looking at a pool that seemed to be filled with Kool-Aid. Crowded, sudsy, and lime-colored, the water teemed with the sandy, ruddy, smoky bodies of Vietnamese. Many of the swimmers were veterans: scarred, disfigured, de-limbed, so their swimming was erratic, jarring, off-course, cranky. There were no discernible lanes such as the Europeans had established, no pathways through which swimmers could move along in orderly queues. Everyone was swimming, paddling, and flopping this way and that, acting as would a mad rush of waterbugs when a stone falls in the pond.

Looking closer, I saw the water appeared greasy, as if it were made up of sheets of wax paper spread in diaphanous layers.

There was no chlorine, no chlorine smell, but an odor of sweat, urine and burnt rubber.

I dove in.

I think I was the only Chinese in the club. It was the same Sak Woi Club that had been seized by the government and now opened to party members and factory operatives. Since our factory had been taken over, I had been running a machine and this entitled me to use the pool.

The French had kept a woman at the brink of the door leading from the showers to the swimming area. She looked as stern as the cow that stands at the Gate of Hell. The lady re-proved and turned back anyone who had not showered. Now that woman was gone and people walked in off the street, trunks under clothes, stripped at waterside and jumped in. Since not many people had running water at home in those days, I think, some used the pool for bathing not for recreation.

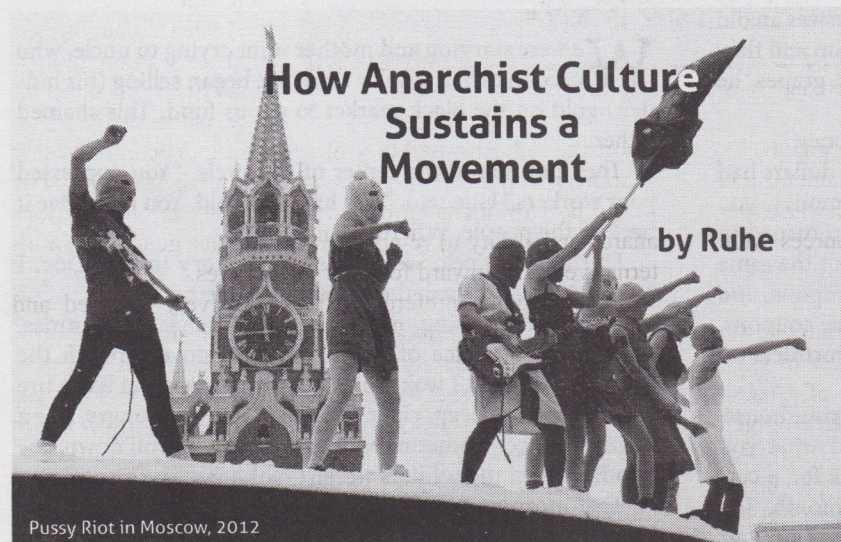
I broke the surface angry. Some flailing swimmer had lashed me along the leg, making my flesh sting as if it had been cut by a sapling. I had a gagging taste in my mouth.

I jogged my eyes open, swam one length, then removed myself from the messy pool

Admittedly, there was equality. It was not the French and the Americans taking everything. Now, no one had anything.

I moved forward, shouldering aside a tracery of wind that swept my dirty, drizzling locks.

Nhi (Nancy) Chung was one of the boat people who left Vietnam in 1978. She lost her mother, brother and sister in escaping the country. After six months on a ship and a month in a Manila refugee camp, she came to the U.S. She became a New York City public school bilingual teacher, instructing students in Vietnamese, Cantonese and Mandarin. She now teaches at a city elementary school.



Underground Passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture 1848-2011

Jesse Cohn

AK Press, 2014, 421 pp., akpress.org, \$22.95

In *Underground Passages*, Jesse Cohn begins with the apt metaphor of anarchist resistance culture as a tunnel: it is “a way of living in transit *through*” this world. Resistance culture is “not mainly defined by its end; it is a middle, a means.” Anarchist cultural production is a way of making sense of the world, a figurative place inhabited temporarily in the time between the present and the future of anarchy.

The wonderfully written introduction asserts that anarchist resistance culture

is a way for anarchists to “prefigure a world of freedom and equality” even as they live in a place fundamentally hostile to our vision. In other words, “anarchists practice culture as a means of mental and moral survival in a world from which they are fundamentally alienated.”

Anarchist art and cultural production aim to “as much as possible, embody the idea in the act, the principle in practice, the end in the means.” Moreover, with anarchists often being in a state of migration and exile, shared cultural forms can create a sense of stability where it was otherwise lacking. Anarchist resistance culture created (and continues to create) a “counterpublic” that fosters community while also providing a form of outreach that entices others towards anarchism.

Cohn, an associate professor of English at Purdue University North Central in Indiana, organizes the book by genre of cultural production, with chapters exploring anarchist literature, poetry, drama, song, film, and other forms. He insightfully analyzes these, drawing out commonalities that exist across national and genre borders.

Experimentation in different genres has been a key way anarchists have spread their ideas; yet all too often historians look to

newspapers rather than cultural production. The author also shows how anarchists have often maintained a critical stance towards the very genres they were working in. For example, demanding active and skeptical readers and questioning the division between spectator and performer that exists in drama.

As much of Cohn's exploration is oriented towards the early 1900s, there's considerably more about anarchist resistance culture then than about the present. Still, he does bring some of the discussion into the present, taking up the films of Submedia, the writings of CrimethInc, and the genre of anarchist "riot porn."

While Cohn makes an effort to introduce each work or creator as they are discussed, the striking number of works examined in the text's 395 pages is a bit overwhelming.

The more prior knowledge readers bring to the text, the more they will get out of it. Those widely read in anarchist literary forms will likely enjoy the discussions more than those with less familiarity. For example, there is a particularly enjoyable discussion of the aesthetics of anarchist newspapers.

The book is well researched and well documented, and there are many points for further exploration. It was especially exciting to see how many non-English sources were consulted.

Ultimately, Cohn's exploration is written with an eye towards the future—it asserts a specific interest in what can be learned from the past. Throughout much of *Underground Passages*, the rich expressions of revolt that emerged when anarchism was the strongest are examined.

At those times, resistance culture was intimately connected to anarchist movements and organizations, as with, for example, the CNT and FAI in Spain in the 1930s. At those historic moments anarchist resistance culture was more outward looking. It had a visible presence in the form of newspapers, lectures, events, and more.

But Cohn asserts that in other periods during which anarchism was less visible, such as during the 1890s era of "propaganda of the deed," or during the period following the Spanish civil war and the defeat of the Revolution in 1939, anarchist resistance culture was more inwardly focused.

Politically, it focused more on internal debates and conflicts, while its cultural forms spoke "the language of a bohemia that has lived on the margins of public life." Cohn sees

this both historically, with anarchism's relationship to avant-garde movements, and more recently, with affinities to punk rock.

While the author's characterization of the punk subculture as being mainly white and self-limiting is valid, this has largely become an anarchist truism. Thus the discussion on the limits of punk seems almost passé, as punk has become less political since the late 1990s.

Cohn blames contemporary trends in anarchist thinking such as primitivism and insurrectionary anarchy on the individualistic orientation of punk rock, claiming that it gives

many anarchists a preference for "the erratic, individual eruption of desire and aggression."

He never considers that the growth of these expressions might be related to a changing political context (more people finding themselves in increasingly precarious working situations) that would render some of the older forms of anarchism less relevant.

Instead, he argues that a contemporary anarchist resistance culture could begin to re-

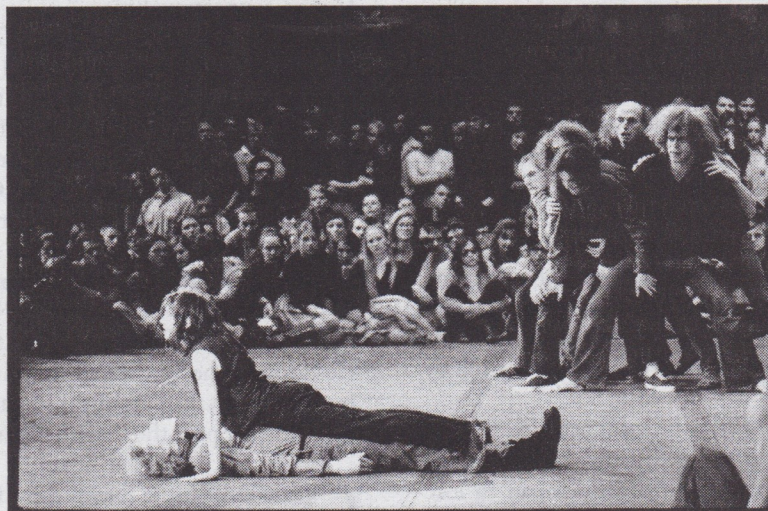
assert the radical possibility of something different and that anarchism could offer an enticing alternative—just as it had in the past by focusing on a larger audience. He mentions anarchists' ability to re-appropriate popular genres as an alternative to the inward focus of subcultures.

Reflecting his preference for collectively oriented and mass anarchism, Cohn argues that these "resistance cultures are bound to flourish best wherever they meet real and deeply felt needs." The discussion ends up being the usual subcultural-versus-mainstream orientation debate that never really seems to go anywhere.

Underground Passages presents the anarchist cultural history of its chosen period in a discerning manner. The scope of the work ensures that for nearly all students of anarchist history, there is something to be learned. It's an excellent starting point for continued research and for conversation.

In the tradition of the anarchist resistance culture studied here, this book demands further active reading and engagement, not simply passive consumption.

Ruhe is an anarchist living in the occupied territory currently known as Michigan. They are involved with Sprout Distro (SproutDistro.com) and are interested in how anarchist ideas and approaches can be communicated to people beyond the narrow subculture.



The Living Theatre performing "Antigone," May 1969, Grenoble, France

Anarchists Confront the Marxist State in Cuba

Continued from P.24

shortly after those in Europe. From their beginnings they have faced constant persecution, from petty harassment to major crackdowns. Anarchists and anarcho-syndicalist had key roles in Cuban labor struggles, popular education, producer cooperatives and other areas of contestation at least until the 1930s.

Between 1903 and 1914, anarchists played important roles in many strikes. During these years, the anarchist movement also created alternative recreational and cultural facilities, medical clinics, housing, and producer and consumer cooperatives. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans were involved in these projects.

From the 1930s on, the Cuban anarchists experienced increasing repression. In the 1950s, many of them became actively involved in struggles against the military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, and, like most people, they celebrated its ouster in 1959 by the guerrilla insurgency led by Fidel Castro.

At first, many anarchists had a hopeful attitude toward the new regime, while not completely trusting it. Toward the end of the regime's first year in power, they began to lose hope as activities of independent labor unions and cooperatives were repressed and all criticism of the government started being labeled "counterrevolutionary." At the same time, the Castro regime began an intensive campaign to gain the support of leftist oppositional tendencies and organizations in other countries.

One person who facilitated this endeavor was Manuel Gaona Sousa, Secretary for International Relations in the Asociación Libertaria de Cuba (ALC), an important anarchist organization.

Gaona enthusiastically supported the guerrilla insurgency and went on to support the new government. In his position with the ALC, he was in charge of maintaining contacts with anarchist groups throughout the world, enabling him to claim to speak for the Cuban anarchists.

In November 1961, a few months after Fidel Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist and began incorporating the Cuban Communist Party into the government's apparatus, Gaona published "A Clarification and a Statement of the Cuban Anarchists" which misleadingly asserted that "nearly all anarchist activities are now integrated in the various agencies of the Cuban Revolution."

It also falsely claimed that no anarchists were being imprisoned for their beliefs and activism. Both assertions had been repeatedly refuted in Cuban anarchist publications, including one by others associated with the ALC in the summer of 1960. For details, see an English translation of Rafael

Uzcategui's 2012 article, "Authoritarian Demonization of Anarchists: Cuba and the Gaona Manifesto," at theanarchistlibrary.org. See also Chapter 4 of Frank Fernandez' *Cuban Anarchism: The history of a movement* (See Sharp, 2001).

The wording of Gaona's denunciation of his former comrades mirrored official propaganda, including statements such as, "We want to alert fellow anarchist movements in Mexico, Latin America, and the world, and fellow Spanish-speaking exiles in America, so that they won't be taken unawares by the malicious and deceitful information sent out by people who serve, consciously or unconsciously, the Cuban counterrevolution."

To legitimate his claims, Gaona had his manifesto signed by 25 Cuban anarchists (although it later emerged that many signatures had been gathered through deception). Many who were asked to sign refused because they considered the text a betrayal of basic anarchist principles.

Given the tightening grip of Castro's communist dictatorship, those who rejected Gaona's text faced persecution, imprisonment and worse. Gaona actively promoted the persecution of his former comrades, many of whom were forced to flee into exile.

Gaona's document was circulated widely in anarchist circles around the world and was cited in propaganda put out by various Marxist groups internationally as an indication of the wide support the Castro dictatorship enjoyed.

Outside Cuba, it fostered confusion and distrust of Cuban anarchists that lasted for decades. Many anarchist groups and individuals abroad became suspicious of those Cuban anarchists critical of the Castro regime. They regarded them as undeserving of support because of their opposition to a regime attempting social reform while under siege by the US government.

However, some anarchist groups challenged the lies, including the Cuban Anarchist Movement in Exile, (Movimiento Libertario Cubano en Exilio), centered in Miami, the Views & Comments group in New York City, and the Federación Libertaria Argentina. These developments are chronicled by Fernandez and by Sam Dolgoff, in *The Cuban Revolution: A critical perspective* (Black Rose Books 1976).

As Fernandez notes, the Castro regime responded to the anarchists' criticisms with denials, character assassinations and charges of counter-revolutionary activities. This is a familiar tactic of all Marxist state authorities in their treatment of anarchists, who they view as threats to their power.

It remains for those who cherish and fight for a future free from oppression and illusion to reflect on the implications of the anarchist-Marxist encounter in Cuba.

Quincy B. Thorn is a longtime anarchist living in the Pacific Northwest.

For past *Fifth Estate* articles on Cuba, visit FifthEstate.org and type the island name in the search box under Archives.

Shorts

Continued from P.3

the staff laid out the then weekly paper which undoubtedly accounts for much of the hearing loss experienced by older FE members. The band also played for numerous benefits to support our publishing efforts.

Three of the original members, Rob Tyner, Fred "Sonic" Smith, and Michael Davis have passed away, but guitarist Wayne Kramer and drummer, Dennis Thompson, carry on the group's spirit.

The MC5 are being honored this summer by a commemorative exhibit at the Lincoln Park Historical Museum in the suburb from which they hailed. Information at lphistorical.org.



CANEK SANCHEZ GUEVARA 1974-2015

Che's anarchist grandson, a rebellious writer, musician, photographer and talented graphic, as well as an anarchist, died during heart surgery in Mexico City on January 21 at age 40.

Born in Havana, as a teenager he became disgusted by the Castro regime's persecution of artists, writers and others.

At 22, he went into exile in Mexico to fight what he called the Cuban "monarchy" led by the man he had known as "Uncle Fidel."

Sanchez Guevara was active in the Cuban Libertarian Movement In Exile for many years, and wrote for Mexican anarchist publications such as *Letras Libres* and *Milenio Semanal*.

He asserted that the Cuban revolution had given birth to a socialist bourgeoisie and to repressive apparatuses for defending the bureaucracy from the people it claimed to represent.

He denounced "the criminalization

of difference, the persecution of homosexuals, hippies, free thinkers, trade unionists and artists.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN FOR ALEXANDER KOLCHENKO

In today's Russia, any activist—anarchist, left-wing, or liberal—can be labeled as an enemy of the state and locked up. The authorities' persecution of dissenters intensified after the Russian 2014 annexation of Crimea.

In May 2014, a 26-year-old Crimean anarchist, Alexander Kolchenko, was arrested, along with Ukrainian filmmaker, Oleg Sentsov, and two local activists, Gennady Afanasiev and Alexei Chirni.

They are accused by the Russian security agency FSB of planning and carrying out what the authorities characterized as "terrorist attacks," including setting fire to offices of pro-Russian political organizations. They face 20-year sentences if convicted.

Kolchenko is currently being held—essentially as a pre-trial political hostage—in Moscow's Lefortovo jail.

Letters of support can be sent to: Kolchenko Aleksandru Aleksandrovichu, 1989 g.r, Lefortovskij Val, dom 5, p/ja 201, 111020 Moskva, Russia. Or, at rosuznik.org/write-letter. Also, see Moscow Anarchist Black Cross reports at avtonom.org/en.



THE ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN PAPER *Open Road*, published in Vancouver, Canada, between 1976 and 1990, is now available online for old friends and new readers. It was published by anarchist

and anti-authoritarian veterans of the social insurgencies and counter-cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Complete issues, including artwork, are posted online at zisman.ca/openroad. The paper focused on anarchist cultural issues, native struggles, ecology, prisoner support, and feminism.

For a while, *Open Road* was the largest circulation English language anarchist publication in North America, with over 18,000 readers in 1980. However, by 1990 it lost a significant amount of readership and was no longer sustainable.

There is more about the paper and a selection of articles in Allan Antliff's anthology, *Only a Beginning* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004). For more background, see Robert Graham's Anarchism Weblog at: robertgraham.wordpress.com.



A 266-PAGE, PAPERBACK, English version of Raoul Vaneigem's latest text, *Self-Portraits and Caricatures of the Situationist International (SI)*, has been translated by Not Bored's Bill Brown.

As an active participant in the SI during the 1960s, Vaneigem's descriptions are based on direct personal experience.

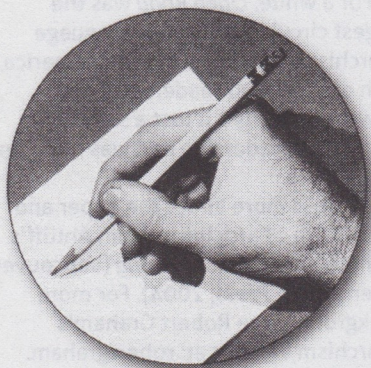
The book that made his reputation, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, is a trenchant exploration of the potential for refusal and revolt in the subjective ordinary experiences of modern life. For many, it is as important as Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. Vaneigem parted ways with the SI in 1970.

Those interested in learning more about the SI, which played such an influential role in the French insurrectionary activities of 1968, should read this book. Available from Colossal Books, P.O. Box 140041, Brooklyn NY 11214, or free online at notbored.org/caricatures.pdf

Send letters via email to fe@fifthestate.org or Fifth Estate, P.O. Box 201016, Ferndale MI 48220
All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten. Letters may be edited for length.

Letters

Continued from Page 2



The guru also actually sanctioned and encouraged the murderous attack on Pat, even though he publicly denied it.

I found a website that has three letters from Pat Halley and other writings from people who went through the guru's organization and came out critical of it because of its exploitation of them and others.

In his letters, Pat made it clear that he had a lot of respect for inner personal spirituality. And, apparently, the person who was the guru later distanced himself from his earlier claims to be the highest spirit in the universe.

The letters and the other writings are at ex-premie.org/best/pathalley3.htm

Doing FE Distro

It has been a real pleasure to distribute the last two issues of the *Fifth Estate* in Pittsburgh. They sit comfortably on the literature table, "in case you have a burning steak of anarchy." Sometimes when there are no words, it helps me to point to the *Fifth Estate*. I hope you are getting some subscriptions from Pittsburgh and that you won't have to send copies and not charge much longer.

This month I distributed the *Fifth Estate* at the April \$15 unfair labor practice strike, the Thomas Merton Center Festival Reception at the Sheridan hotel, and the IWW's May Day Eve event in Homestead. I'd like nothing more than to

distribute the Fifth Estate at the 100th Annual Pennsylvania Farm Show in January 2016.

Kenneth Miller
Pittsburgh

FE replies: Thanks, Kenneth, for your help in doing free distribution. You and others have done this vigorously for the last few years and it has helped us gain many subscribers. Probably the percentage of return against distribution is not as high as we'd like, but enough to make it worthwhile.

Asiatic Mode of Production

The review of Ron Tabor's book by Kevin O'Toole was pretty good (See "Throwing Marx Out with the Bathwater," Spring FE 2015). He was weak, though, on Tabor repeatedly blaming Marx and Engels so much for the emergence of State Communism.

History isn't that simple, especially the authoritarian Russian Empire that has dictatorship in its blood going back to the time of the Mongol invasion in the 1200s. Tabor agrees that the Bolsheviks inherited the Czarist overbearing bureaucracy including its secret police. The weight of this past is overwhelming and defined what the USSR became.

Tabor mentions a bit about Marx's concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP). The AMP (also known as Oriental despotism) were ancient state collectivist systems (China, Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, Russia, the Incas, and others) that Soviet academics debated circa 1925 until 1931 and finally decided it "didn't exist."

Good for their sake since AMP class societies looked too much like what Soviet communism was becoming and the gulag was just around the corner. Tabor doesn't take the AMP to its conclusion and like most Western anarchists and many Marxists and left-Trotskyists, believe Soviet-type states were/are state-capitalist. His heart is in the right place, as many other state capitalist thinkers are, but they're making a grave, unthinking and West-centric mistake.

All Easterners I've spoken with agree that the "semi-Asiatic" nature of Russia (Lenin and plenty of Russian Marxists back then used the term) and the fully AMP of China's past led them to be analogous to modern AMPs which spread in various ways to other Communist countries or some (N. Korea/Vietnam) had them in their history and was stamped on them.

Bob McGlynn
Brooklyn

Pulling Out the Rug

I am a bit perplexed by Kevin O'Toole's assertion that anarcho-communists and syndicalists will have "the theoretical rug" pulled from under our feet by Ron Tabor's critique of Marxism.

Anarchists have a long line of economic theory and practice that is in no way dependent upon Marxism, either theoretically or in terms of practical program. Indeed, much of Marx's work was developed in the course of his many battles with anarchists, who were developing an anti-capitalist economics while Marx was still busy trying to nurture bourgeois revolutions.

Unlike the anarchists, Marx never developed a fully formed economic analysis, instead limiting his published work to critiques of capitalism and of its various challengers. One would search Marx's collected works in vain for anything resembling Peter Kropotkin's constructive writings on the subject.

If Tabor believes that Marx provided "a vision of a just society and a strategy and a set of tactics to achieve it" he is mistaken. But Marx's failures do not in any way undermine the syndicalist approach or the anarcho-communist vision of a free society.

Jon Bekken
Philadelphia

Disappointed

There was a lot of good material in the Anti-Marx issue, although I was slightly disappointed about what was left out. Namely, a critique of the con-

temporary influence of Marxism, particularly on anarchist and radical currents. Insurrectionary models have become very important in the last few years and much this is entangled with Marxist discourse.

This doesn't automatically invalidate it, but does mean we need to examine it to make sure that the theory isn't allowing an avenue for authoritarian practices to invade our currents.

Contrary to Peter Werbe's assertion in his article, "Marxism," the ideology is not just "the most interesting sector of sociology," though his point seems accurate in academic settings. Marxism often takes on other labels now. For instance, many ideological Marxists call themselves anarchists. This is important to combat.

Many people who call themselves anarcho-communists adopt a model of rigid organization and planning that strikes me as being closer to the more authoritarian end of council communism.

Many even denounce individualism while co-opting heroic figures such as Emma Goldman. To her infinite credit, Goldman considered anarchists to be individualists by nature, and quoted Nietzsche to describe them as aristocrats of spirit, but not by "purse or by birth."

A similar tendency is in place among many syndicalists IWW members, most who seem to have rejected the surrealist spirit of *The Rebel Worker* and the slogan of, "I won't work!"

I would love to see people creating imaginal insurrections. Groups like the IWW have strong historical ties to insurrection, surrealism, and anti-work, and it would be good to see some return to this.

Jason Rodgers
Albany, N.Y.

Peter Werbe responds: Yes, I realize that Marxism, now not seemingly connected with the police states it engendered (well, except for China, N. Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba), has become appealing again to some looking for an all encompassing theory of revolution—even to anarchists, which is why I wrote the article.

Anarchy in Scotland

Many anarchists refuse to support any separatist/secessionist movements on the grounds that they are nationalist. I'm glad that Alexander avoided that absolutist position, even though he fell short of full support for Scottish independence. (See Spring 2015 FE, "Autarchy in Scotland.") But I'm worried by a few of his remarks that seem based on error or misapprehension.

"Scotland" can scarcely be called a "fiction." It was an independent country till the 18th century, and it had (and has) languages of its own (Gaelic and Scots). If some people admire Robert Burns (a Scottish "nationalist" rebel) and eat haggis, this is no cause to imply that the tradition is mere "fake-lore." A tradition that's recent (like the tartan system) can be a real tradition. Is anarchism itself much older than the 19th century?

Alexander mentions that the "NO" vote won 45% of the referendum. Is this a typo for 55%?

He also says that "everyone" is astonished that "an energy of refusal and remaking of politics" has gathered "under the independence banner." Surely, the poets and rebels who founded the Scottish National Party (SNP) would be astonished to hear that no one had ever noticed their "energy of refusal!"

After the Jacobite uprising of 1745, Alexander says, "Scotland became the full junior partner in Great Britain's imperial expansion, and took a share of the spoils." I presume he's not referring to the Clearances and enclosures that drove generations of ruined Scottish crofters to emigrate so that a few Whig lords could enjoy deer hunting on the

vacated land? (See T. Winogrend's article, also in FE Spring 2015.)

What evidence does Alexander have to show that "the bloodiest border in the history of the island" is that separating the Highlands from a "bourgeois" Lowlands? I always thought the bloodiest border was that between Scotland and England, where for centuries the "Border Reivers" (call them land-pirates) rustled cattle and carried on violent feuding.

Plenty of Scottish leftists supported Independence, and since the vote, SNP membership rolls have grown at Labour's expense. The Celtic League and other radical groups have charged election fraud. The movement is not dead.

Should anarchists support separation and secession? The 19th century American individualist anarchist Lysander Spooner said, yes, everyone should secede, down to the level of the family! If we withhold our support from separatists out of some kind of anarchist-fundamentalist purist position, we may abdicate our respect for the desire for freedom.

Let rebel lands be liberated: Catalonia, N. Ireland, Basqueland, the Western Sahara, the Berbers, the autonomous Kurds and other leftist secessionist entities, and then we can work for "anarchy in Scotland"—and the world.

Peter Lamborn Wilson
Woodstock, N.Y.

FE Note: At one mention of the vote totals there was an error in the text. Fifty-five percent of Scots voted to remain within the United Kingdom.

—photo: Norman Nawrocki



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